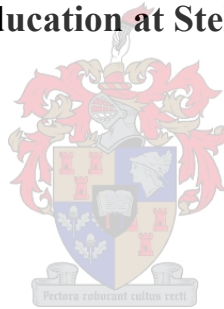


**TVET College students' participation on Facebook and their identity
construction**

**By
Lamese Chetty**

**Thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree of
Master of Educational Psychology
in the Faculty of Education at Stellenbosch University**



**Supervisor : Mariechen Perold
March 2016**

DECLARATION

By submitting this thesis electronically, I declare that the entirety of the work contained therein is my own, original work, that I am the sole author thereof (save to the extent explicitly otherwise stated), that reproduction and publication thereof by Stellenbosch University will not infringe any third party rights and that I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it for obtaining any qualification.

Name: Lamese Chetty

Date: March 2016

ABSTRACT

Technology is a very important part of our daily lives. We cannot leave the house with some sort of smart device including a cell phone, tablet or laptop. Young people that are in the age cohort of 18-35 years have grown up within this technological movement and social networking sites make up a huge part of their daily interactions. One such popular social networking site, Facebook, allows these young people a platform for online engagement and limits face-to-face interaction. The TVET College is an ideal place for understanding the particular age group within an educational sector. These first year students seem to construct their identity in such an online social platform. Knowledge on this type of experiences as well as the added value of online engagement can provide some interesting information in a new age of development of these young people and their construction of their identities. This research can shed light on the particular developmental level of these students as well as their sense of identity engaging online.

The aim of the study was to investigate the experiences of TVET College first year students, specifically exploring their participation on Facebook and how it contributes to their identity construction. This was a qualitative study based on the social representations theory. This refers to the association of an individual's characteristics and that which other people ascribe to the individual. The particular sample was purposively selected and they participated voluntarily in one-on-one interviews and consented to the researcher observing their FB profile pages.

The research findings highlighted the important role of Facebook in the lives of TVET College first year students and how they gain a sense of belonging as a mechanism for coping in today's life. Four main themes were identified, namely a real world identity, an on-line identity, the on-line self in relation to other people and the practical implications of being active on-line. These students viewed the virtual world as a world where they were accepted, whereas this did not happen in the real world, where they reported often feeling isolated. Their online interactions incorporated their understandings of who they are and was thus closely connected with how they represented themselves on-line. Therefore, the research concluded that they seem to construct their identities in an online manner.

Keywords: TVET College, Facebook, Social Networking Sites, face-to-face interaction, online interaction, identity construction

OPSOMMING

Tegnologie is 'n belangrike deel van mense se daaglikse lewens. Selfone, tablette en skootrekenaars vergesel ons waar ons ook al gaan. Jongmense tussen die ouderdomme van 18 en 35 het grootgeword binne hierdie tegnologiese omgewing en sosiale media verskaf die platforms vir 'n groot deel van hierdie jongmense se daaglikse interaksies. Een spesifieke populêre sosiale medium, Facebook, maak dit moontlik dat aanlyn interaksie gemaklik kan plaasvind, met minder gepaardgaande aangesig tot aangesig interaksie. 'n Kollege vir verdere onderrig, die 'TVET College' bied 'n ideale omgewing waar die genoemde ouderdomsgroep binne 'n opvoedkundige omgewing waargeneem kan word. Dit kom voor asof daar by eerstejaar studente by so 'n kollege 'n identiteitskonstruksie proses plaasvind deur aanlyn sosiale platforms te gebruik. 'n Ondersoek na hierdie proses kan waardevol en interessante inligting na vore bring ten opsigte van hoe jongmense hul identiteit konstrueer binne 'n nuwe era waar tegnologie so 'n groot rol speel. Hierdie navorsing het dus ten doel om lig te werp op studente binne hierdie spesifieke ontwikkelingsfase, en hoe hulle hul identiteit beleef deur aanlyn betrokkenheid.

Die doel van die navorsing was om die ervarings van eerstejaar studente by 'n TVET kollege te ondersoek, spesifiek ten opsigte van hul deelname aan Facebook en hoe dit bydra tot hul identiteitskonstruksie. Dit was 'n kwalitatiewe studie, gebaseer op sosiale aanbiedingsteorie (social representations theory). Dit verwys na die assosiasie van 'n individu se eienskappe met dié wat ander mense aan die individu toeskryf. Die betrokke deelnemers is doelgerig geselekteer. Hulle het vrywilliglik ingestem tot individuele onderhoude en tot die waarneming van hul Facebook profiel bladsye deur die navorser.

Die bevindinge van die navorsing het gedui op die belangrike rol wat Facebook in die lewens van die TVET kollege eerstejaarstudente speel. Vier hoofemas is geïdentifiseer, naamlik die regte wêreld identiteit, die aanlyn wêreld identiteit, die aanlyn self in verhouding met ander en dan ook die praktiese implikasies van aanlyn aktiwiteit. Dit het voorgekom asof die deelnemers die virtuele wêreld ervaar as die ruimte waar hulle aanvaar word, in teenstelling met die regte wêreld waar hulle meestal geïsoleerd voel. Hul aanlyn interaksies word geïnkorporeer in hul ervaring van wie hulle is. Hoe hulle hulself aanbied aanlyn beïnvloed hoe hulle oor hulself dink.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This thesis has been one of the biggest achievements in my life. I cannot describe how much this means to me.

I would like to dedicate my thesis to my late father, Rashaad Chetty, who has always been my biggest motivator in life. His reminders of hard work and dedication runs through my mind every day.

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ACRONYMS

SNS - SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES

FB – FACEBOOK

TVET – TECHNICAL VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING

FET – FURTHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING

F2F – FACE-TO-FACE

NQF – NATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK

SAQA – SOUTH AFRICAN QUALIFICATIONS AUTHORITY

GET – GENERAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING

HSRC – HEALTH SCIENCES RESEARCH COUNCIL

DOE – DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

DHET – DEPARTMENT OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING

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CHAPTER ONE

CONTEXTUALISATION, BACKGROUND AND RELEVANCE

In the social jungle of human existence, there is no feeling of being alive without a sense of identity.

Erik Erikson (cited in Hollyoak, 2014)

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Through the development of technology, current generations have become familiar with technological devices such as the computer, television and the cellphone. This statement is echoed by Wartella and Reeves (1985) who claim that “with the introduction of each new wave of innovation in mass media throughout the twentieth century – film, radio, television – debates on the effects of technology have recurred, especially with regard to the effect on young people” (Wartella & Reeves, 1985, p. 31). Access to the internet has made possible a new way of connecting with other individuals, a unique way that does not depend on physical human interaction. This technological movement might also be steering young people’s sense of identity, which is formed by and through social interaction, but in this case now also within a virtual environment.

A British research study showed that young people aged 13-17 years “spend more than 30 hours a week using video games, computers, e-readers, cellphones and other screen-based technology” (Telegraph, 2012, p. 13). This indicates that younger people, including adolescents, are frequently interacting in an online social world, and are thus consistently connected to the internet. “Research has shown that media – along with family, peers, and school – can be a major agent of socialisation and learning during this time, but that it is through a convergence of a child’s developmental level and preferences, media content, and surrounding circumstances that the effects of media unfold” (Wartella & Jennings, 2000, pp. 35-36). This is further supported by Waterman who says, “The nature of the social expectations pertaining to identity choices arising within the family, the schools, and the peer group will contribute to the particular identity development pathways employed” (Waterman, 1982, p.

345). With this said, it appears that there may be a shift towards internet social interaction with accompanying identity development processes occurring via social networking sites (SNS).

“The use of SNS’s can have both positive and negative effects on the individual; however, few research studies identify the types of people who frequent these Internet sites” (Wilson, Fornasier, & White, 2010, p. 2). It is therefore important to research how common this phenomenon is among young people, especially within an educational environment. Furthermore, this research study aims to explore how students are connecting via SNS, especially Facebook in this specific setting, a Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) College where learning is taking place. Facebook provides a very unique way of connecting and interacting with others, but how does it contribute to young people and specifically students’ sense of identity? This will be explored within the research study as Facebook (FB) may provide a way of understanding the emotional involvement that young people may experience via Facebook, and their ensuing sense of who they are.

1.2 BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

“Social media refers to the means of interactions among people in which they create, share, and exchange information and ideas in virtual communities and networks” (Wales & Sanger, 2001). Therefore, as technology is developed at a very fast pace, social media is also fast developing and takes on many different forms, including SNS’s (e.g. Facebook, MySpace), blogs and microblogs (e.g. Twitter), content groups (e.g. YouTube, Flickr), social gaming, podcasts, and wikis, to name a few. In online social networking sites, social interaction and connection is the objective (Cheung & Lee, 2010, p. 24). FB is one example of a Social Networking Site (SNS), and one of the very popular social media. The concept of social media will be described in more detail later in the conceptual analysis.

The context of social networking provides relevant information for this research study, as FB has become a social environment for many adolescents as well as younger and older adults to socialise in a contemporary way, in a different way to how social interaction happened in the past; namely without face-to-face (F2F) interaction. These individuals engage in online conversations and express their emotions quite easily on these forums. Pempek, Yermolayeva, and Calvert (2009) agree with this statement as they mention that social networking sites have captured the interest of many adolescents and young adults (Pempek et al., 2009, p. 228).

Limited research indicates that “more than 90% college students maintain a Facebook profile” (Moreno, Jelenchick, Egan, Cox, Young, Gannon and Becker, 2011, p. 452) and “Social networking sites (e.g., MySpace and Facebook) are popular online communication forms among adolescents and emerging adults” (Subrahmanyam, Reich, Waechter, & Espinoza, 2008, p. 420). This shows that many young people are now connected to their friends, acquaintances and family members mainly via their cell phone, but they can also connect via their computer, laptop or tablet. They can also access a variety of information with the click of a button. An academic from the IT university of Copenhagen calls it “the new sociological phenomenon of micro co-ordination” (Cooper, 2012, p. 39). This refers to texting as a new way of communicating between people which allows us to change our appointments at any given time of the day. In today’s world, we are allowed to send a text message to anyone as an excuse to change plans. This is one example of what Kormas, Critselis, Janikian, Kafetzis, and Tsitsika (2011) referred to when they said that “excessive internet use may instigate potential adverse effects upon the psychosocial development of adolescents” (Kormas et al., 2011, p. 1).

A Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) College, previously known as Further Education and Training (FET) College, is an environment in which adolescents and young adults engage with one another and with the institution, and where SNS’s form major (and popular) platforms for such engagement. “Public FET Colleges are established and operated under the authority of the Further Education and Training Colleges Act 16 of 2006 and resort under the Department of Higher Education and Training” (FET Colleges, 2013). One of these public TVET colleges can be found in the Western Cape and was established in 2002. This college encourages and applies SNS activity by using it as platforms to connect with current and prospective students of the institution. SNS’s seem to be utilised as an effective way of disseminating information to staff, students and other individuals.

An implication of predominant communication via SNS, is that the non-verbal component of traditional face-to-face communication is not present. In more traditional ways of communication, young people’s emotional attachment to family and loved ones is based on verbal as well as non-verbal messages and interactions. When engaging with people via SNS however, the non-verbal behaviour is removed and they converse just by texting their conversation. The result of this is that students are then able to say anything to anyone without F2F interaction, which could lead to relationships forming differently. Caplan (2003) ascribes it to individual thinking in the following way: “Preference for online social interaction is a

cognitive individual-difference construct characterised by beliefs that one is safer, more efficacious, more confident, and more comfortable with online interpersonal interactions and relationships than with traditional F2F (face to face) social activities” (Caplan, 2003, p. 629).

On the other hand, communication via SNS could also imply that because of the above-mentioned different, so-called safer and pared down ways of communication, young people, in this case college students, could present themselves, their needs, and experiences in more succinct ways. This carries some potential for positive effects, as Moreno et al. (2011, p. 448) refer to an example of the benefit of this implication: “If college students use Facebook profiles to disclose symptoms of depression, these disclosures could be viewed by peers as well as a larger online audience who may be able to facilitate identification or referral for mental health concerns”, should it be necessary.

It would thus seem as though there might be a multitude of implications and effects, some positive and some negative, of SNS communication becoming the medium of choice among college students.

1.3 RESEARCH AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

“One communication phenomenon of great interest, and subject to much debate, in both popular and academic literature is the association between Internet use and psychological health (e.g. depression and loneliness)” (Caplan, 2003, p. 626). Blaszczynski (2006, p.8) supports this statement by warning that overuse of any social media “can lead to an array of social, psychological, physical, and other problems for young people.”

The developmental phase of adolescence, which is the phase where most of the student population at a TVET College find themselves, requires particular attention when exploring the phenomenon of SNS use in College age students. “During adolescence and continuing through emerging adulthood, explorations are made into various aspects of identity. Adolescence and emerging adulthood are crucial periods for identity development, and for this reason theorists and researchers have devoted a considerable amount of attention to this topic” (Arnett, 2007, p. 175). Erickson’s exposition of the various developmental stages refers to adolescence as the phase when the binary of identity versus role confusion becomes important (Donald, Lazarus, & Lolwana, 2002, p. 78). The focus during this stage is on social relationships. Adolescents need to develop a sense of self and individual identity. Success with

this developmental task leads to an ability to stay true to yourself and feel comfortable, while failure leads to role confusion and a doubting of self. Therefore, this is a critical period within their lives for realising their sense of identity and their contribution to life. One of the contributing factors to such a growing sense of identity includes adolescents' online engagement, predominantly with Facebook, as it constitutes a large part of their social relationships. Here young people might engage in positive and negative behaviour. Most of their time is spent on building relationships through social networking, and the young people are then faced with a type of online emotional association to these relationships. It thus seems as though FB might provide the social interactive space where the development and negotiation of identity could happen in adolescents or emerging young adults who engage actively with it. Therefore the aim of this research study is to explore the sense of identity of first year students (adolescents who are approaching adulthood) at a TVET College, and who are actively engaging on Facebook. The aim is further extended to also include an exploration of how their identity might be constructed and shaped by this activity.

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The study is intended to explore the contribution of active engagement on Facebook to the sense of identity in a group of first year students at a TVET College in Cape Town.

The research question was formulated as follows:

“How does Facebook contribute to a sense of identity in a group of first year students at a TVET College?”

The following sub-questions were included:

- How do first year TVET College students construct their identity?
- How do first year TVET College students present their identity on Facebook?
- How does engaging on Facebook contribute to first year TVET College students' sense of identity?

1.5 RESEARCH PARADIGM

“Underlying each research study is the researcher's theoretical framework, or paradigm” (Wiersma & Jurs, 2009, p. 10). The research paradigm, therefore, suggests the assumptions about knowledge and the way the research will be conducted by the researcher. This study has

been conducted from an interpretive-constructivist paradigm and this occurs when “. . . the researcher depends on the participants’ interpretations of the situation and tries to capture the participants’ language and point of view” (Wiersma & Jurs, 2009, p. 10). This paradigm holds that people’s realities are socially constructed and shaped by their cultural context. The research paradigm will be elaborated on further in Chapter 3 where the research methodology will be presented in detail.

1.6 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

“As a plan, research designs deal with matters such as selecting participants for the research and preparing for data collection – activities that [could] compromise the research process” (Wiersma & Jurs, 2009, p. 11). A basic qualitative design has been utilised in this study. Data collection has therefore been conducted using a qualitative research methodology which allows the researcher to look at qualitative data and analyse it. “Qualitative research is best suited to address a research problem in which you do not know the variables and need to explore” (Creswell, 2012, p. 16). The research design for this research study adopted a thematic analysis method to analyse the data. This will be further explored under the section for data analysis.

The research methodology “focuses on the research process and [determines] the kind of tools and procedures to be used” (Mouton, 2001, p. 56). This refers to how one will collect and analyse data in support of answering the research question. “Collecting data means identifying and selecting individuals for a study, obtaining their permission to study them, and gathering information by asking people questions or observing their behaviours” (Creswell, 2012, p. 232). In the following section, the methods that the researcher proposed to use in gathering data will be described.

1.7 RESEARCH METHODS

1.7.1 SELECTION OF PARTICIPANTS AND SELECTION CRITERIA

The participants for this research study were purposefully selected students from a TVET College in the Western Cape. “In purposeful sampling, researchers intentionally select individuals and sites to learn or understand the central phenomenon” (Creswell, 2012, p. 206). The way in which they were selected was by sending all first year students at the TVET College invitations via the College Facebook page to volunteer to participate in the study. The preliminary criteria for selection included, firstly, participants had to be a registered first year

student at this TVET College and, secondly, they had to have belonged to Facebook for at least a year before starting at the college. Ten of the responding students will be selected to participate. “The idea of qualitative research is to purposefully select informants (or documents or visual material) that will best answer the research question” (Creswell, 1994, p. 148). Therefore the criteria for eventual participation were volunteers that consented to a series of structured questions via individual interviews, and who provided access for the researcher to their personal Facebook pages. The researcher requested access to the participant’s personal profile on Facebook and once accepted, only then was the researcher able to view the participant’s Facebook profile page.

1.7.2 DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENTS AND METHODS

Data was collected by conducting one-on-one interviews with each of the participants, and by accessing and observing their personal profiles on Facebook. As the researcher is interested in their activities on Facebook permission was sought to view one month’s activities retrospectively and one month’s activities live.

The research study included collecting data from participants as well as their Facebook pages only after they have agreed to avail themselves and their personal information. Their personal profiles were available to gain demographic information as well as confirmation that they are indeed first year students at a TVET College.

“A popular approach in qualitative interviews, the one-on-one interview is a data collection process in which the researcher asks questions to and records answers from one participant in the study at a time” (Creswell, 2012, p. 218). The interviews allowed the researcher to gain insight from the participants through their responses as well as through observations. These interviews were conducted with the nine participants who have volunteered and have been selected purposefully according to the response to the general Facebook request, and who have subsequently consented to participate in the research study. The interviews were audio-recorded with the consent of the participants and transcribed in order to make analysis possible.

1.7.3 DATA ANALYSIS

“During qualitative data collection, you will collect text or words through interviewing participants or by writing field notes during observations” (Creswell, 2012, p. 239). The technique of transcription has been used for making analysis of all data collected for the

research study possible. “Transcription is the process of converting audiotape recordings or fieldnotes into text data” (Creswell, 2012, p. 239). These transcriptions allow for the participants’ information to be correctly captured and organised. Therefore the one-on-one interviews were analysed according to transcriptions.

A thematic analysis process as described by Braun and Clarke (2006) was employed in order to make meaning of the data gathered as described above. “Thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data. It minimally organizes and describes a data set in (rich) detail” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 79). It also allows a researcher to compare the identified themes with relevant literature in order to clarify, understand and relate to the meaning of the findings. This process will be more thoroughly explained in chapter three.

1.8 ETHICAL CONCERNS

Research often involves people’s personal responses and insights and because of this, as researchers we need to respect the rights of people. This is supported by Wiersma and Jurs who say: “Because human participants are involved, ethical and legal considerations are of concern” (Wiersma & Jurs, 2009). This means that a number of concerns need to be evaluated when research is planned. Firstly, participants must be informed regarding the duration of the research as well as their commitment when providing their consent. “Informed consent must address the purposes and procedures of the research, and a description of any possible risks or negative consequences” (Wiersma & Jurs, 2009).

Secondly, confidentiality as well as anonymity of the participants in the research need to be ensured by the researcher, unless otherwise required by law. This means that the researcher will not disclose the identities of the participants to anyone as their rights, physical and emotional well-being is important to the researcher. The researcher needs to make sure that certain procedures are in place to protect the information provided by the participants. This is also emphasised by Mouton who mentions: “The scientist has the right to search for truth, but not at the expense of the rights of other individuals in society” (Mouton, 2001). Therefore the participants in this study will only be referred to by means of pseudonyms, and the particular TVET College where the study is to be conducted will not be identified in the final research report.

Data gathered is stored electronically on the researcher's personal password-protected computer and has only been accessible to the researcher and the supervisor of this study. Raw data and transcripts will be kept in such a safe way for five years following the completion of the study.

Thirdly, as psychologists, we are responsible for not harming participants during research studies. The principles of beneficence and non-maleficence apply. "This obligation also entails protecting them from harm, unnecessary risks, or mental and physical discomfort that may be inherent in the research procedure" (Wiley, 2002, p. 47). Therefore, psychologists-in-training also need to conduct themselves in an ethical and unharmful manner. As a Facebook profile page may carry personal information, it is important that confidentiality will be strictly adhered to, as should such information be made public, it could cause harm to the participants. Although Facebook is a social platform in the public domain, it is still the prerogative of the owner of the page to decide who has access to what content on the page. Therefore the informed consent of the participants is critical in this regard. The researcher may however notice signs of psychological and/or physical distress, and/or threats to the psychological and/or physical integrity of the participant as voiced in posts and communications on his or her particular FB page. In such a case, the particular participant will be referred to the Student Support Services Unit of the College for assessment and support regarding the distress or threats.

With regard to gaining the informed consent electronically, Miller (1999, in Wiley, 2002) resolved the issue as follows: "The electronic consent form can be signed or initialized electronically, or it can be accepted by default. Therefore, whether participation takes place online or in the *laboratory*, the participants are still informed about the nature of the project and must give their consent prior to data collection" (Wiley, 2002, p. 50).

1.9 TRUSTWORTHINESS

The aim of trustworthiness in a qualitative inquiry is to support the argument that the inquiry's findings are worth listening attentively to. This refers to the researcher being trusted with the participant's data as well as it being protected. It also provides credibility and objectivity to the research study. "In order to maintain high trustworthiness in a qualitative study, Krefting (1991) suggested four criteria to ensure valid interpretation of data: truth value, applicability, consistency, and neutrality" (LaBanca, 2010, p.22). More information about measures to ensure trustworthiness in this study will be expanded on in Chapter 3.

1.10 KEY TERMS

This section aims to provide meanings to certain terminology in popular use in social media and used by both the researcher and participants of the study. The following terms will often be used within this research study, thus rendering it important to understand their meanings.

1.10.1 SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES (SNS)

“People joining a social network usually create a profile and then build a network by connecting to friends and contacts in the network, or by inviting real-world contacts and friends to join the social network” (Mayfield, 2006, p. 14). Thus, SNS can be described as online communities where people are able to connect to others. This usually occurs by accessing an online internet connection and people exchange information willingly.

1.10.2 SUBTYPES OF SNS

There are various types of SNS available to young people in South Africa as well as all over the world and they can easily join these networks through their cellphone, computer and tablet. Facebook is one such type of SNS that is easily accessible.

1.10.2.1 Facebook

“Facebook is a social networking service launched in February 2004, owned and operated by Facebook Inc. Users must register before using the site, after which they may create a personal profile, add other users as friends, and exchange messages, including automatic notifications when they update their profile” (Wikipedia, 2007).

1.10.3 ADOLESCENCE

“Adolescence is a period of the life course between the time that puberty begins and the time adult status is approached, when young people are preparing to take on the roles and responsibilities of adulthood in their culture” (Arnett, 2007, p. 4).

1.10.4 EMERGING ADULthood

Arnett has theorised this concept of “emerging adulthood, conceptualizing it as the age of identity explorations, the age of instability, the self-focused, the age of feeling in-between, and the age of possibilities” (Arnett, 2007, p. xiv).

1.10.5 TVET COLLEGE

The TVET College offers courses mainly targeted on the vocational and scarce skills needed within South Africa namely; Business, Engineering and Utility studies. The Business studies include: Financial Management, Marketing Management, Generic Management and Human Resource Management. The Engineering studies include: Motor Mechanics, Electrical and Civil Construction. The Utility studies include: Hospitality, Sports and Tourism studies.

These courses equip students with the necessary skills to be placed in a working environment by offering National Diplomas and Certificates.

1.11 CONCLUSION

This research study will focus on the construction of adolescents’ identities, and the significant effects of adolescent’s experiences of Facebook on this important developmental task. The research questions will lead attempts to describe the possible contributions of FB interaction on identity construction among first year TVET College students by exploring their online activities, whether it may be positive or negative.

This chapter contains a brief introduction to the background of the study, the research aims and questions, the research methodology as well as ethical considerations and the trustworthiness of the proposed study.

In Chapter 2 a review of relevant literature will be presented and explored. Chapter 3 will consist of a more detailed discussion of the research paradigm, the design and methodology, with a detailed description of the research process. The findings of the study will be presented and discussed in Chapter 4, whereas in Chapter 5 the findings will be weighed up against the research questions, and limitations, strengths and recommendations for further research will be presented.

CHAPTER TWO

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW

Think about what people are doing on Facebook today. They're keeping up with their friends and family, but they're also building an image and identity for themselves, which in a sense is their brand. They're connecting with the audience that they want to connect to. It's almost a disadvantage if you're not on it now.

Mark Zuckerberg (2009)

I shall be exploring the context of the college education sector in detail, providing information on the developmental age of students attending this type of institution, as well as attempting to describe the context of students and social media.

2.1 THE CONTEXT OF FURTHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING (FET) IN SOUTH AFRICA

The Further Education and Training (FET) band in South Africa is distinctive and multifaceted. The Further Education and Training Act 16 of 2008 defines FET as the following: “‘further education and training’ means all learning and training programmes leading to qualifications at levels 2 to 4 of the National Qualifications Framework or such further education and training levels determined by SAQA and contemplated in the South African Qualifications Authority Act, 1995 (Act No.58 of 1995), which levels are above general education but below higher education” (Department of Education (DOE), Further Education and Training Colleges Act 16 of 2006, 2006, p. 8). The reasons for the aforementioned are that within the FET, secondary schooling is offered to learners who have completed Grade 9 within the GET (General Education and Training) phase. This is further substantiated by Kraak and Hall (1999) who say, “Formally, FET is defined as that band which provides learning programmes between the Levels 2-4 on the National Qualifications Framework (NQF)” (Kraak & Hall, 1999, p. 1). Previously the FET Act of 1998 (DoE, 1998b) described FET as encompassing all the learning and training programmes leading to a qualification from NQF levels two to four, as stated by the SAQA Act of 1995.

“This band of education and training is also referred to as ‘post-school’, meaning that it refers to education and training that takes place after leaving school, even if only with a Grade 9 completed” (FET Website, 2014). The only constraint of this is that the learner applying to become a student must be 16 years or older. The FET website continues to emphasise: “The target student group is therefore responsible senior adolescents and adults who are serious about following an education and training programme with a view to acquiring marketable skills” (FET Website, 2014).

In 1998 the following statement was made: “The main players in South African tertiary education are the public sector universities, technikons, teacher training colleges, and technical colleges” (Frederick d'Almaine, Manhire, & Atteh, 1998, p. 434). Tertiary education was therefore offered by the above institutions to cater for higher education opportunities for school leavers in the hope that they will obtain qualifications to secure employment in the future. With this decision, major changes within these institutions occurred, especially in technical colleges which are now better known as Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Colleges. It has a very interesting history impacting on the specific developmental age of students in attendance.

2.1.1 THE HISTORY OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN COLLEGE SECTOR

“The South African technical college sector developed in the early twentieth century to provide theoretical learning alongside the practical training of the apprenticeship system” (McGrath, 2004, p. 137). This meant that an individual could study a selected trade through theoretical and practical training allowing him/her to obtain a skilled qualification which prepared them for the working environment. Spencer discovered the aforementioned as he emphasized the following: “It is a function of the Technical Colleges, whilst carrying the mass of students as far as they can go, to provide a real higher technical education, narrower in scope than the full-time university course but within limits of the same order, for the very able few” (Spencer, 1937, p. vii).

The Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) conducted research at the Technical Colleges to provide an understanding of what was provided and stated the following:

Technical Colleges are about people – training people, educating people, equipping people and working with people. They offer:

- *Relevant, affordable and career-specific education and training;*

- *Formal career education and training programmes in a wide variety of fields of study;*
- *Community-based education and training in formal and non-formal programmes;*
- *Courses varying in length from a few days (seminars and short courses) to three years (post-standard 10 Diploma);*
- *Second-chance-to-learn courses in a variety of subjects;*
- *Adult literacy and numeracy education and training;*
- *Skills development; and*
- *Entrepreneurship and small business development programmes.*

(HSRC, 1996, pp. 3-4).

Therefore, Technical Colleges provided various opportunities to different individuals depending on their highest standard (now known as Grade) in the past. As a result, the many changes that occurred in the past within South Africa, i.e., the political struggle, played a major role in the development of Technical Colleges. Particularly facilities at these colleges, as well as racial segregation in terms of Bantu Education aimed at Black students, impacted Technical Colleges' development and efficacy negatively.

The South African Technical Colleges also suffered from neglect in the past and were then viewed as lesser institutions of learning. "They have become highly differentiated institutions due to racially defined skewing between state-aided (those previously 'white' institutions that were granted semi-autonomous status) and those state colleges that fell under the direct control of the ex-Department of Education and Training (for Africans only)" (Kraak & Hall, 1999, p. 22). This is further supported by Brown's report where it is stated that, "In South Africa, the challenge is magnified by a dark history. Until only two decades ago, the higher education system was strictly segregated, and many professions for which vocational colleges trained students, were legally reserved for whites" (Brown, 2012, p. 1). As a result of the Apartheid era, Black students were not provided fair opportunities at Technical Colleges in the past, and so were educationally disadvantaged. This led to poor infrastructure and quality of learning was viewed as being of an inferior standard. During the past 20 years therefore, these Technical Colleges underwent significant restructuring and transformation. "A parallel process was followed for colleges of education, through a Departmental Technical Committee appointment in September 1997 that delivered in the following year a document called *The Incorporation*

of Colleges of Education into the Higher Education Sector: A Framework for Implementation (DOE, 1998).

2.1.2 THE MERGING OF THE COLLEGE SECTOR INTO FURTHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING COLLEGES

These aforementioned Technical Colleges were taken under the wing of the Department of Higher Education and planned to change dramatically. The plan was to reduce these colleges drastically in shifting towards bigger Further Education and Training (FET) Colleges. “In this way approximately 150 former technical colleges were reduced to 50 FET Colleges, with geographical representation as follows: Eastern Cape – 8; Free State – 4; North-West – 3; Gauteng – 8; Mpumalanga – 3; KwaZulu-Natal – 9; Limpopo – 7; Northern Cape – 2; and Western Cape – 6” (Cloete, 2009, p. 64). Important to note is that none of the existing sites had closed and that these colleges would cover urban, semi-urban and rural areas.

Harman and Meek (2002, p.1) mention that many countries have been restructuring institutions of learning according to merging policy under higher education systems, including South Africa. They add that there have been many ways and mechanisms to achieve this. They say:

Drivers of these efforts have been many and varied but particularly important have been pressures to:

- *Increase efficiency and effectiveness, especially in coping with rapid and substantial growth in student numbers which in turn brings heavier demands on institutions;*
- *Deal with problems of non-viable institutions and institutional fragmentation;*
- *Widen student access and implement more broad scale equity strategies;*
- *Differentiate course offerings to cater for greater student diversity and to improve the quality of graduates; and*
- *Increase government control of the overall direction of higher education systems, especially to ensure that higher education institutions serve more directly national and regional economic and social objectives.*

(Harman & Meek, 2002, p. 1)

These issues became particularly relevant when colleges had to merge, as such a merging process took and still takes years of commitment and drive for success. This is supported by Harman and Meek who stipulate: “In the literature on mergers it is generally agreed that it can

take up to ten years for the wounds to heal and for the new institution forged from previously autonomous identities to operate as a cohesive and well integrated whole” (Harman & Meek, 2002, p. 4).

With the changing developments within higher education institutions, trial and tribulations are still prevalent within this new dispensation and transformation still needs further attention.

2.1.3 THE TRANSFORMATION OF FURTHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING COLLEGES INTO TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING COLLEGES

The shift from technical to further education and training has been historical and contributes to the reasons why FET Colleges are multi-faceted. “The *New Institutional Landscape for Public Further Education and Training Colleges* (DOE, 2001) envisaged a series of 50 large institutions grounded in nine attributes:

- *Large, multi-site institutions;*
- *Increased autonomy;*
- *A mixture of specialisation and multi-purpose institutions;*
- *A new quality assurance framework;*
- *An increased focus on open and distance learning;*
- *A greater focus on access for learners with special needs;*
- *Better articulation and collaboration with higher education;*
- *A commitment to improved student support services; and*
- *A stress on partnerships with government and the private sector.*

(DOE, 2001, p.6)

Even though these plans are achievable, it has many challenges for the FET Colleges for the future as they still have not reached the above during the past 13 years. Transformation, therefore, is determined by how well Technical Colleges merged into FET Colleges and which are currently known as “Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Colleges” (DHET, 2013, p. xi).

The TVET Colleges were initiated to offer higher education linking to the world of work to respond to the needs of the South African economy. “Simultaneously, they are to respond to

the social disparities of apartheid by providing disadvantaged communities with access to high quality and relevant education and training that provides the skills and attitudes required for employability, including – within the context of insufficient jobs in the formal economy – training for entrepreneurship and for the informal economy” (Powell, 2012, p. 645).

“Colleges also have a key role in formation of new citizen and members of communities” (McGrath, 2004, p. 147). This relates to the target audience of the student population that the TVET Colleges attract to study at the institution. This student population are enrolling in an institution to which they will belong for a number of years and so citizenship is a vital lesson learnt among a South African and foreign population. “The 2007 Community Survey collected data on: population size, composition and distribution, migration, fertility and mortality, disability and social grants, school attendance and educational attainment, labour force and income (StatsSA, 2007). This researcher’s intended study aims to understand the experiences of this particular 18-24 year age cohort. As recommended by the DOE, it seems important to understand aspects of the 18-24 age cohort, “. . . since this is the age cohort referred by UNESCO in terms of participation in the post-school education” (Cloete, 2009, p. 20).

The Community Survey identified particular traits of the 18-24 age cohorts which relates to the researcher’s intended study, even though the study was conducted in 2007. “There were 6 758 366 persons within the 18-24 age cohort in 2007, representing 13.9% of the total South African population” (Cloete, 2009, p. 41). Out of this population, “2 383 548 (35.3%) were attending an educational institution” (Cloete, 2009, p. 41.). This relates to the target audience for the intended research study where the researcher will further research this particular developmental level of 18-24 year old as they are the prevalent age of students at TVET Colleges.

2.2 DEVELOPMENTAL LEVEL OF FIRST YEAR STUDENTS AT TVET COLLEGES

There are a number of theories that exist about human development. Various theorists have researched and developed their theories on children developing into adults. “One of the most influential theories of life-span development is the psychosocial theory of Erik Erikson” (Donald et al., 2002, p. 61). Erikson described eight stages of psychosocial development where in each stage an individual experiences challenges in two opposing forms. “Erikson proposed that the main aim of development was not biological survival but, rather, the formation of

identity” (Smith, 2012, p. 33). Therefore, the formation of identity will be further explored in this chapter.

Erikson’s psychosocial stages of development are as follow:

- *First year (of life) – trust versus mistrust: The first crisis an infant has to negotiate is how to trust someone to meet his or her needs.*
- *Second year – autonomy versus shame and doubt: In this stage an infant has to learn to control his or her own behaviour. Failure to meet the crisis posed here will lead to a child to becoming doubtful and uncertain about him- or herself.*
- *Third to sixth year – initiative versus guilt: A child has to learn to become independent in this stage, through initiating and enjoying his or her own activities. If children are prohibited from initiating their own activities, they will begin to develop feelings of guilt for establishing their own independence.*
- *Seventh year to puberty – industry versus inferiority: In this stage a child has to learn to feel confident in his or her own activities and feel competent in activities valued by others.*
- ***Adolescence – identity versus role confusion: In this stage the peer group is extremely important as a child begins to develop a sense of identity in relation to his or her peer group.***
- *Early adulthood – intimacy versus role confusion: The challenge here is to find an intimate life partner or risk loneliness.*
- *Middle age – generativity versus stagnation: Productivity in work enables a person to refine his or her sense of self and avoid stagnation.*
- *Old age – integrity versus despair: This is a difficult stage, when a person tries to make sense of the meaning of his or her life without becoming bitter and despairing over lost opportunities*

(Cole, Cole, & Lightfoot, 2005).

Erikson looked at the entire development of the individual over his/her life-span, but I would like to emphasise the specific stage during adolescence to which he refers as the stage of “identity formation versus role confusion”. This is particularly relevant to the target audience at the TVET Colleges. Many of these students are between the ages of 18-24 years. Although the stage of adolescence is usually assumed to end at the age of 18 years, different terms are

used for the period between 18 and 24 years. Arnett (2007) has provided this stage a specific term of “emerging adulthood”.

“A great deal happens in the late teens and early 20’s that is related to development earlier in adolescence and that has important implications for the path that development takes in adulthood. I have called this period emerging adulthood, and I consider it to include roughly the ages 18 to 25” (Arnett, 2007, p. 13). He refers to this developmental stage as the period where individuals are finding themselves in accordance with love, livelihood, perspective and personal values. Arnett makes reference to this particular age group which ranges up to 25 years (Arnett, 2007). However, it should be noted the college also has older students which includes 26 – 45 years. These students may thus also be considered as being classified as a first year students who embark on studying in their lives for the very first time. This, therefore, raises the issue of identity being established at any age as they are embarking in a new context, new friendships and a new learning venture when entering the TVET College.

2.2.1 ADOLESCENCE

“Adolescence is the period of transition from childhood to adulthood” (Smith, 2012, p. 205). This is both an exciting and worrying stage where adolescents are experiencing physical and emotional changes. The physical changes that the adolescent experiences is called puberty. The adolescent also has many emotional questions and is on the path of discovering who they are. “After developing gradually and steadily through childhood, at puberty the body undergoes a biological revolution that dramatically changes the adolescent’s anatomy, physiology, and physical appearance” (Arnett, 2007, p. 34).

As mentioned before, Erikson’s stage of adolescence seems to be the stage where the main challenge is for the individual to discover who he or she is and where he or she is going. Erikson’s (1982) perspective on adolescence included that “. . . patterns of identity must emerge from (1) the selective affirmation and repudiation of an individual’s childhood identifications; and (2) the way in which the social process of the times identifies young individuals – at best recognising them as persons who had to become the way they are and who, being the way they are, can be trusted” (Erikson, 1982, p.72). Donald et al. argue that identity is both individualistic and community based and the balance between the two is being searched for. (Donald et al., 2002). This also relates to Sadowski’s (2004) statement that adolescence is the time of discovering and adolescents are searching for their importance in the world where they

face many pressures from important role players in their life. Therefore, identity construction seems to be a central theme within adolescence and so presents an imperative focus on discovery among a TVET student population.

Developmental tasks during this phase may also include (mainly in Western societies), the following:

- Successful transitions from school to either tertiary institutions or the world of work.
- Learning academic skills that might be needed for being successful in higher education or work.
- Becoming psychological independent.
- Developing close relationships with partners of the same or opposite sex.
- Constructing a sense of who they are, in other words their identity.

(Cicchetti & Rogosch, 2002).

“Therefore, adolescence harbors some sensitive, if fleeting, sense of existence as well as a sometimes passionate interest in ideological values of all kinds – religious, political, intellectual – including, at times, an ideology of adjustment to the times patterns of adjustment and success” (Erikson, 1982, p.73). This adjustment often brings about many insecurities and concerns and the adolescent needs to also learn to be resilient at this sensitive time in their lives.

In light of the mentioned transitional period, it has been found that young people often draw upon their social networks as resources to negotiate these passages (Holland, Reynolds and Weller, 2007). This points to the use of FB as a potential social network where support might be available for first year students at TVETs.

2.2.2 EMERGING ADULthood

Emerging adulthood has five distinct characteristics according to Arnett (2007). They are firstly the stage of exploring identity; and secondly the stage of insecurity. Then there are also stages of self-determination, of feeling unbalanced; and the stage of future prospects (Arnett, 2007, p. 13).

Therefore it would seem as though the stage of emerging adulthood, such as adolescence, does provide the need for identity explorations. It seems to be a critical stage involving self-exploration, including exploring and developing morals, beliefs and value systems, which all aid in shaping an individual's identity. This is confirmed by Murphy, Blustein, and Bohlig (2010) who state that "Emerging adulthood comprises a new developmental stage for individuals who are between the ages of 18 and 25 years and who have postponed adult roles and responsibilities for further exploration of unusual work and educational possibilities" (Murphy, Blustein, & Bohlig, 2010, p. 174).

Arnett provided the term "emerging adulthood" as he felt that there is a certain stage after adolescence, but before adulthood. He therefore added that the stage was still critical for development as many of these individuals were still on the path of discovering themselves, especially as they come into contact with the "real" world out there. This links to the researcher's intended study on identity including the aspect of the role of technology in this developmental task.

2.3 IDENTITY

"Identity is the embodiment of self-understanding" (Sadowski, 2004, p. 7). Wild and Swartz further define "identity" as "a person's clear and consistent sense of who he or she is, what he or she believes and values, what he or she is going to do with his or her life, and where he or she fits into society" (Wild & Swartz, 2012, p. 234). Therefore, identity refers to an individual's journey of self-discovery, that which he/she wants to be and being moulded into that unique person. "A sense of self emerges through such constant observation and activity. Self-concept refers to the way in which we define ourselves, and self-esteem refers to the value we place on that definition" (Sylvester, 2007, p. 127). This occurs in a way that the individual develops and builds, or constructs, an identity.

2.4 IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION

The construction of identity is a topical issue that theorists such as James Marcia and Erik Erikson researched and about which they developed theories. Marcia (in Shaffer & Kipp, 2010) developed a theory about four different statuses which constitute the process of developing an identity. In 1980 he created a structured interview that provided researchers the opportunity to classify in which of the four different identity statuses adolescents could find themselves. The identity statuses that he defined and proposed are as follows:

- **Identity diffusion.** *Persons classified as “diffuse” have not yet thought about or resolved identity issues and have not yet charted future life decisions. Example: “I haven’t really thought much about religion, and I guess I don’t know exactly what I believe.”*
- **Identity foreclosure.** *Persons classified as “foreclosed” are committed to an identity but have made this commitment without experiencing the “crisis” of deciding what really suits them best. Example: “My parents are Baptists and so I’m a Baptist; it’s just the way I grew up.”*
- **Identity moratorium.** *Persons in this status are experiencing what Erikson called an identity crisis and are actively asking questions about life commitments and seeking answers. Example: “I’m evaluating my beliefs and hope that I will be able to decide what’s right for me. I like many of the answers provided by my Catholic upbringing, but I’m sceptical about some teachings as well. I have been looking into Unitarianism to see if it might help me answer my questions.”*
- **Identity achievement.** *Identity-achieved individuals have resolved identity issues by making personal commitments to particular goals, beliefs, and values. Example: “After a lot of soul-searching about my religion and other religions too, I finally know what I believe and what I don’t.”*

(Shaffer & Kipp, 2010, p. 505)

The important influence of educational contexts on the above-mentioned processes of adolescents forming identities was described as “critical” by Sadowski in 2004. This is usually the time when young people build friendships which are meaningful to them. This is also a critical time where, as mentioned, the 18-24 year old within the environment of FET colleges, or as currently known, the TVET college sector, is busy with the very important developmental task of constructing his/her identity. Therefore, this is relevant to the social adjustment that they need to make during their first year college experience in order to successfully transition into college life and expectations thereof.

Taylor (2011) argues that identity refers to the totality of personalities, abilities, attributes, interests and relationships. As people/adolescents become aware of these components of themselves, they critically engage with it, and seek feedback from their environment to either confirm or refute their ideas about themselves and who they are. Social factors therefore play

an important role in this process of identity construction. Therefore SNS's might provide opportunities for presentations of selves, for evaluation of those presentations through social feedback and therefore for identity construction. This necessitates a closer look at the question posed in the following paragraph.

Can identity be constructed online? This is the question asked in this research study. Numerous studies that focus on online identity formation have been found in the literature in this field, and I shall attempt to describe the trends reported and/or discussed in the following section. The focus shall be on Facebook (FB) as one of the social media which offers interactive engagement or network opportunities to young adults and adolescents on the internet.

2.5 FACEBOOK AS A MEANS OF SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT

Facebook was originally designed for college students by Mark Zuckerberg in 2004 while he was studying at Harvard University (www.facebook.com). He specifically designed it with the focus being targeted to college students on campus. This site was designed with the purpose of connecting with family and friends via an online social networking site either through their cell phone, tablet or computer. “. . . it is about social interactions between individuals and groups” (McClaird & Anderson, 2008, p. 1).

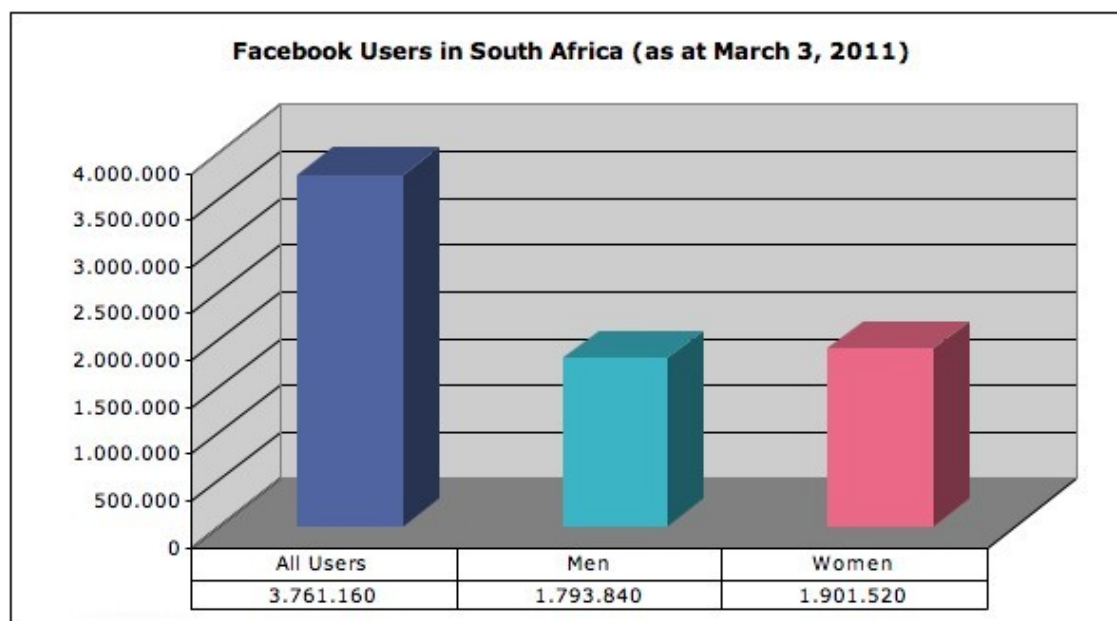


Figure 1: Facebook usage in South Africa – March 2011

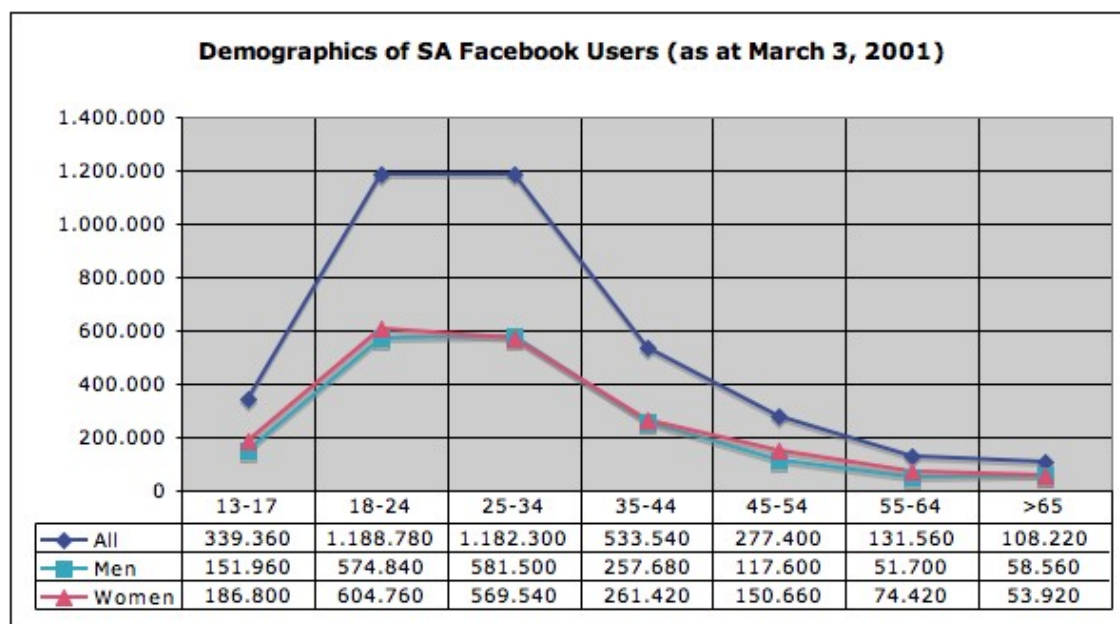


Figure 2: Demographic information of SA Facebook users

Most users (64 %) are between 18 and 34 years old. There are slightly more female Facebook users (51 %) than male (49 %). With the exception of users who are between 25 and 34 years old or older than 65, there are more women on Facebook than men.

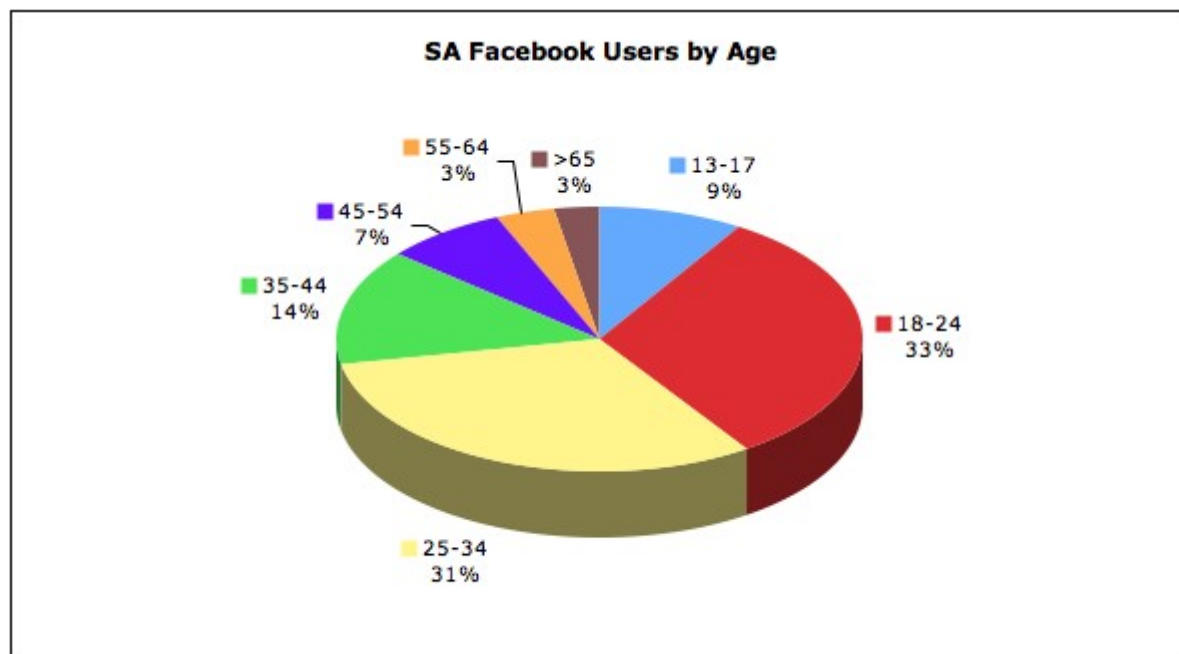


Figure 3. SA Facebook users by age

Figures provided by Claus Lauter on his website www.socialmedialogue.com (Lauter, 2007).

Facebook allows individuals to create profiles of themselves and then connect with other profiles of individuals that they know as well as those they do not know. “Profiles may include items such as relationship status, political views, contact information, personal interests,

favourite books or movies, educational background, academic coursework, and many other types of data” (Eberhardt, 2007, p. 19). These profiles can also include a wall where friends and family can leave messages and users can also share photos and videos. Boon and Sinclair (2009) refer to profiles as “virtual representations of a real individual” (Stuart & Sinclair, 2009, p. 101). This is also known on Facebook as a “newsfeed”. This profile can therefore form part of the identity of an individual as it provides a representation of the individual to other individuals online.

McClaird and Anderson refer to identity being represented as fluid and not fixed as our image is created by what we do and how we do it (McClaird & Anderson, 2008, p. 2). This image is constantly being changed by the daily interactions the individual encounters. As daily interactions happen online as well as offline, these may all shape the individual’s self-concept and identity. Bosch (2009) indicated in her study that there is very limited research in this area and specifically in South Africa as no studies exist on the topic of identity construction through Facebook. Zhao, Grasmuck, and Martin (2008) also indicate that identity construction in an online context has not been researched. Therefore, in 2009 where her study focused on SNS for online teaching and learning, Bosch took a deeper look at UCT students on Facebook and discovered that many of these students had limited privacy settings and allowed all information to be viewed by others. These included personal information, photos, videos, physical addresses and cell phone numbers. This brings a number of issues in contributing danger factors which have been researched before. That includes cyberbullying, human trafficking, online pornography, and also stalking, just to name a few. Additional to the aforementioned, Zhao et al. (2008) mentions that: “Disembodied online encounters enable people to hide their undesired physical features, and anonymity allows individuals to re-create their biography and personality” (Zhao et al., 2008, p. 1818). This online social networking site has raised many concerns among parents and educators and often these concerns highlight many implications for college students as indicated by Eberhardt (2007) and related to this research study. The very relevant question of Eberhardt to this study is “How does or can this behaviour help students develop the identity they need to effectively address complex questions, take a stand based on their own beliefs, and negotiate meaning with others?” (Eberhardt, 2007, p. 19). In his research he emphasized the notion of “virtual communities” as well as first year students transitioning to college. He speaks about these virtual communities being places where first year students have a sense of belonging and therefore feel more comfortable in settling in their new college context. He highlighted that individuals are able to view many other students

profiles and see how they are stressed, excited, and many other emotions and not feel so lonely. “For many students, such virtual experiences of identification and connection can be powerful steps toward feeling a sense of belonging in their new campus community” (Eberhardt, 2007).

FB seems to make it possible for users to present themselves in certain ways online, in addition to how they present themselves face-to-face. This refers to a person’s representation of one’s self within society.

2.6 SOCIAL REPRESENTATIONS THEORY

In light of the above, the theoretical framework of *Social Representations Theory*, seemed worthwhile to explore. “Social representations are images that condense manifold meanings that allow people to interpret what is happening; categories which serve to classify circumstances, phenomena and individuals with whom we deal, theories which permit us to establish facts about them” (Howarth, 2006, p. 4). Descriptions of an individual, which other people might associate with that person, can be called representations of the individual. Such social representations can become a means of identifying that person, and may have an influence on that individual’s identity construction.

Moscovici (1973, p. xiii, cited in Howarth, 2001) has defined social representations as

. . . systems of values, ideas and practices with a twofold function: first to establish an order which will enable individuals to orientate themselves in their material and social world and to master it; and secondly to enable communication to take place among the members of a *community* by providing them with a code for social exchange and a code for naming and classifying unambiguously the various aspects of their world and their individual and group history.

Freire (1970) contributed a dimension of social representation theory prior to Moscovici’s theorising in 1973 and said that, “Because resistance is a part of identity and because identity is inherently social – resistance has to develop in a community of others and can *only* be a collective practice” (p. 24). So, in essence social representations had already been thought about in the 1970’s and then in the 2000’s Howarth proclaimed and expanded on this theory. Howarth (2006) commented on the inclusion of the concept of resistance, in that it emphasised the co-construction of identity as a result of social representations. Resistance is popular jargon used by theorists in conjunction with adolescence and young people in general as this is a

common emotion exuberated by adolescents. These young people are often represented as being angry as they are experiencing this particular developmental stage. Resistance is often then part of the young person's identity as they are associated with it through others. This seems to be an inherent part of what happens within groups of people, as within the interactive relationships, their social representations are constituted and play important roles. Such representations cannot happen individually, only within the kind of community that Howarth (2006) refers to in her definition of social representations. The question that is posed in this study is whether the virtual space available through FB, can present such a social space or community within which representations of the world and selves can be constituted, and where the kind of feedback necessary for identity construction might be available.

“Certain groups have different degrees of access to the public sphere and have different means with which to present and/or contest particular claims to ‘the real’ . . .” (Howarth, 2006, p. 19). Therefore, the aspect of social representation is a reflection of how we come to learn about the world and how we become familiar with various physical and social objects in our environments. This also refers to how we learn to acknowledge that we belong to a community of other human beings, which is significant to us in terms of class, race, gender, religion, lifestyle and so forth. Therefore, it would seem as though such communities become the social groups where our social representations are co-constructed, often contributing to the formation of our identities. This might be the case in an online community such as Facebook.

Cheung, Chui, & Lee (2011) refer to a “social identity” in their research. “Social identity can create a sense of belonging to an online social networking site when users view themselves as the members of the community” (p. 1339). These members make the individual feel part of their community and therefore there is a certain identity constructed through these psychological relations which allows for social representation. Facebook allows for online interaction with others and in turn can contribute to a socially represented identity. When Mark Zuckerberg created Facebook, his goal was to connect college students at university while studying. He created an online forum where development still continued as students represented themselves by the association to a student as well as to a college community. A college community can become a very imperative association body for a new student, where the individual seeks for a sense of belonging and can transition comfortably to college life and demands. This forms a college community with which they can associate and feel comfortable in.

The following four aspects of communities which have become important in self-representation theory are, firstly, that community can be seen as a source of basic knowledge, secondly, that community becomes a basis of common identities, thirdly, that community can also be a means of marginalisation and social exclusion, and finally that community can be a resource for empowerment (Howarth, 2001 p. 11).

Voelklein & Howarth (2005) summarise Moscovici's (1988) definition of social representations as helping human beings make sense of life, and form interactive relations with others in social spaces. They state that it is only in relationship, that the subject (the adolescent) can make meaning if the object (identity) and develop a so-called reality that is necessary for communication and social interaction (Voelklein & Howarth, 2005).

It would however seem as though social representations theory is considered controversial, as different critiques have been voiced (Voelklein & Howarth, 2005; Raudsepp, 2005). Raudsepp (2005) however concludes that the theory of social representations "...is appropriate for research questions that concern communicative processes within groups that are related to the cognitive-emotional construction of reality, ...", which leads to an assumption that this theoretical framework could shed light on the questions posed in this study.

Howarth (2006) also touches on the above statement, by posing an imperative question that I think is very relative to my study, namely: "What is the relationship between representations and 'the concrete reality'?" (Howarth, 2006, p.5). This is very relevant to how young people may view virtuality and reality, somehow not always seeing the difference. This contributes to my motivation for gaining a perspective on their views. Are they viewing their world on Facebook as this concrete reality? Do they recognise the difference between their online and offline worlds?

2.7 CONCLUSION

In this chapter I have attempted to describe the TVET Sector in a developing phase, especially phasing into the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET). This takes time to process and so has been changing and developing over a number of years, which therefore has a significant history and contextualisation for my study. The historical background of the TVET sector have played and may still play a role in how students perceive themselves.

This chapter also particularly focused on the development level of first year students at a TVET college. Thus, these young people being exposed to the changes in the college environment may also be affected by it and having their development overall influenced by it. From the literature reviewed it is evident that a first year student can change over time and also decide at late 30's or 40's to enrol for a higher education qualification. Therefore, the first year student's developmental level is a critical phase to understand, no matter the particular chronological age. This developmental stage, no matter the age, has a particular identity to establish within a college community and incorporating how the individual represents themselves within a social environment.

Social representation theory forms a theoretical framework for my research study as this best describes how an individual represents him or herself within society. Social representations therefore allow for an understanding of the individual connecting with others via Facebook, and how this social networking site may be connecting an online world with users' "reality."

In the following chapter I shall attempt to elucidate the research paradigm, methodology and design that I have used in planning the research process and also the gathering and analysing of the data to gain a perspective in order to answer the research questions.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS

Well, I think that part of being young is not exactly knowing why you do some of the things that you do. And it's by exploring your life or experimenting or making mistakes and learning from them hopefully that you start to forge an identity.

Stephen Chbosky (cited in Topel, 2012)

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The following chapter provides an overview of the research paradigm which informed the methodology utilised for this study. I shall start by describing my ontological and epistemological stance, and will then identify the appropriate research methodology. In this study a qualitative research methodology was utilised. The research design, participant selection and associated data collection methods will be presented. I shall also introduce the data analysis method and strategies for data verification. The ethical considerations and accompanying measures considered will be added to this chapter.

According to Check and Schutt (2012), “Educational research builds on the method of science, so it relies on logical and systematic methods to answer questions” and it continues in this way as to understand the dependability of the method (Check & Schutt, 2012, p. 9). Data collection methods including one-on-one interviews and the viewing of Facebook profiles has been selected to gather data and will be justified. Therefore, these methods will be outlined in detail.

3.2 RESEARCH PARADIGM

A research paradigm presents the ontological, epistemological and methodological assumptions that direct a researcher’s worldview and planning and meaning-making or understanding of the research process, data and findings. Verification of the data forms a vital component of this process.

“Paradigms are all-encompassing systems of interrelated practice and thinking that define for researchers the nature of their enquiry along three dimensions: ontology, epistemology and methodology” (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999, p. 6). A paradigm consists of certain assumptions about knowledge (ontology), the researcher’s relation to knowledge (epistemology) and the methodology to access it. Ontology can be described as viewing the

nature of reality and what is known about the world and Epistemology is focused on methods with familiarising yourself to the world (Ritchie, Lewis, McNaughton Nicholls, & Ormston, 2013, p. 25). The methodology refers to how the researcher can conduct research into what she/he believes can be known (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999, p. 6). Therefore, paradigms are important to research design because they are significant to what is to be studied as well as the way in which the question needs to be (Terre Blanche, Durrheim & Painter, 2006, p. 40). Mertens (2005) refers to a paradigm as a way of looking into the world (Mertens, 2005, p. 7).

This research study explores the construction of identity through the use of Facebook (FB) and because of this it is based on the *Constructivist Paradigm*. The paradigm, according to Mertens (2005), was provided the *constructivist* name as a noteworthy aspect of this paradigm is the assumption that reality is socially constructed. This paradigm also grew out of a German philosopher's study of interpretive understanding called *hermeneutics*. Hermeneutics is described as the study of interpretive understanding or meaning (Mertens, 2005, p. 12). Therefore, constructivist researchers' basic assumption being that knowledge is socially constructed in the research process and that their need to interpret the meaning constructed in a certain situation, leads to the use of what Mertens (2005) calls the interpretive-constructivist research paradigm. The researcher looked at the construction of identity of first year students at a TVET College through utilising the popular social networking site, Facebook, as a social sphere where people can connect with others.

According to Merriam (1998), in *interpretive* research; the researcher needs to understand the meaning of the experience of the individual within the educational setting and "knowledge to be gained from an inductive, hypothesis-or theory-generating mode of inquiry" (Merriam, 1998, p.4). Therefore, the researcher will merge these two methods to incorporate an interpretive-constructivist paradigm with a qualitative methodology in acquiring the data needed to answer the specific research questions.

3.3 QUALITATIVE METHODOLOGY

According to Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2007), a method can be referred to as an approach which can be utilised to obtain data in educational research and then reach an explanation, understanding or prediction (Cohen et al., 2007). Walliman makes reference to words as important qualitative data which appears in the form of people's emotions, beliefs, ideas, judgements, feelings of comfort, etc. (Walliman, 2011, p. 71). This data is descriptive in nature

and depends on the vigilant connotation of words, the revolution of aspects and variables and the interrelationships that develop between these.

This methodology covers a complex and diverse field and is therefore used as an umbrella term to cover a variety of research questions and situations (Punch, 2009). Merriam (1998) referred to this as “an umbrella concept covering several forms of inquiry that helps us understand and explain the meaning of social phenomena with as little disruption of the natural setting as possible” (Merriam, 1998, p. 5). Qualitative researchers are mainly interested in the construction of people’s meanings of their experiences in their world.

In the methodology of qualitative research, the researcher collects data to learn about certain phenomena from their participants. Protocols are developed to record this data that is sought in the study (Creswell, 2012, p. 17). It becomes possible for the researcher to gain answers from the participants to the questions he or she develops and these questions form measures through which data can be collected. Examples of these include interviews with an interview protocol, which consists of four or five open questions. An observational protocol, in which the researcher records notes about the behaviour of participants (Creswell, 2012, p. 17), according to set-out criteria, is another example of a protocol used in this study.

3.4 RESEARCH DESIGN AND SELECTION OF PARTICIPANTS

In this study a basic interpretive design (Merriam, 1998) was employed. This research design allowed the interpretation of the participants data that was generated.

The participants were selected using a purposive sampling method. This refers to participants who are selected according to their cases for theoretical reasons (Terre Blanche et al., 2006, p. 51). The participants of this research study needed to represent the phenomenon which was explored by the researcher. The researcher thereafter engaged all participants in individual semi-structured interviews and facilitated an observation process which allowed for structured and unstructured questions given to these participants. Initially thirteen first year students volunteered to be part of the study, but only nine participants eventually took part in the interviews. These nine students formed the purposeful sample. The participants were purposively selected as they met the following criteria:

- They had to be registered students at this particular TVET College;

- They had to be first year students who had started in either 2014 or 2015;
- They had to have been members of Facebook (FB) prior to becoming registered students at the TVET College.

The criteria was provided by the researcher in order to select the participants as a convenient representation in order to study this phenomenon and obtain dependable data that can be interpreted. An interpretive-constructivist research is concerned with a detailed and in-depth analysis (Terre Blanche et al., 2006, p. 49). Therefore, the participants took part in specific data collection methods in order to understand the construction of identity through participation on Facebook, within a first year TVET college population.

3.5 DATA COLLECTION METHODS

The selected data collection methods allow the researcher within qualitative methodology to collect information from participants. Creswell (2012) identifies this as a system of collecting data by identifying individuals for the study, gaining their permission to study them and thereafter collecting information on their behaviours by questioning them on it (Creswell, 2012, p. 9). The participants for this study had been selected according to the criteria stipulated in Section 3.4 (above), therefore purposeful selection occurred. The permission was granted by the educational institution (see Appendix G) and consent was provided by every participant to observe their FB profile on the popular social networking site, Facebook and to interview them.

“Interpretive, and especially constructionist, researchers maintain that the meaning of the phenomena varies across contexts, and they adopt a more inductive approach to data collection, investigating, how categories of observation emerge in context” (Terre Blanche et al., 2006, p. 51). This means that the qualitative researcher obtains data that is dependent on the social phenomena that is presented within the context of the participants and the researcher is reliant on the particular situation that the participant is in.

The researcher used two forms of data collection methods. Patton (1990) refers to qualitative information as an important source of data that is elicited by direct observation. That means that the researcher obtains first-hand experience within the field (Patton, 1990, p. 70). This data is therefore collected by interviews or observation methods detailing human behaviour in various interaction (Terre Blanche et al., 2006, p. 51).

Punch mentions the following on interviews: “It is a very good way of accessing people’s perceptions, meanings, definitions of situations and constructions to reality” (Punch, 2009, p. 144). Thus, this data collection method is suited well to the research question, theoretical framework and qualitative method. That is, to obtain from the participants their perceptions on their own constructions of their social reality by accessing and interacting on the popular social networking site, Facebook (FB). Observation and interviews provide rich detail in research for the interpretive-constructivist researcher and this allows for understanding occurrences through looking at particular instances of this occurrences as it may emerge in detailed situations (Terre Blanche et al., 2006, p. 52).

These data collection methods will be explored and described as it was employed in this study in great detail in the sections below. The researcher attempts to highlight the relevance of these methods and why it was deemed best suited to answer the research questions.

3.5.1 ONE-ON-ONE INTERVIEWS

Interviews generally consist of conversations during which sets of questions are asked and answers to them are obtained. In this research study the one-on-one interview approach was adopted to obtain in-depth understandings of the participants’ experiences of being active on FB. These interviews provided the researcher ideal opportunities to engage fully and obtain detailed information with the participants. This is also referred to as *intensive interviewing* according to Check and Schutt (2012) who define it as: “. . . a qualitative method of finding out about people’s experiences, thoughts and feelings” (Check & Schutt, 2012, p. 201). This allowed the researcher the platform to study the individual within his or her context and therefore in the most natural setting. It additionally provided the researcher the opportunity to question specific topics in detail, as well as the opportunity to ask follow-up questions. Different types of interviews exist and in order to obtain answers to the research questions, the researcher had selected a *semi-structured interview*. According to Gillham (2005) semi-structured interviews promotes the quality of the data as it provides a flexible and a balanced measure of data collection. A semi-structured interview consists of the following: 1) the same set of questions are asked of all participants; 2) the process of development for the questions occur during the interviews but maintains focus; 3) interviewees are provided additional questions to prompt the areas of interest if they have yet reached the topic; and 4) Time is adhered to with every interview equally (Gillham, 2005, p. 70). Cooper and Schindler (2003),

cited in (Aborisade, Olubunmi & Phillip, 2013, p. 49), claims that: “Semi-structured interviews start with a few questions juxtaposed with follow-up questions.”

3.5.1.1 Conducting interviews

Initially, apart from the formal ethical clearance (provided as Appendix A) and informed consent processes which will be described in detail elsewhere, permission to conduct the interviews was gained from the head of the institution of learning, which is a TVET College in the Western Cape. An advertisement inviting prospective participants was placed on the college's FB page. As this action, twice repeated, did not yield enough participants, Departments within the college were approached to assist with gaining access to the student population. Lecturers informed students about the research and invited students to participate. Students who volunteered, were informed about the research study in detail and signed consent prior to the interviews.

The interviews were conducted in English as this was the preferred medium of instruction at the TVET College. An interview schedule had been prepared as a guideline for the researcher when interviewing the participants and this is available as Appendix C. The interviews materialized at two of the TVET College's campuses preferably where the participants were based and so did not inconvenience the participants, as the researcher conducted it on site. The interviews were also conducted at appropriate times and venues so as not to interrupt the academic timetable in any way.

The aims of the interview were to obtain in-depth knowledge of the participants' experiences on Facebook and how they perceived this in constructing their identity. Therefore, real life experiences were shared by the participants as well as their perspectives on actively engaging on Facebook with family, friends and acquaintances (people they have met online and have so become Facebook friends).

The interviews were all audio-taped and then transcribed. “I believe that to work most reliably with the words of participants, the researcher has to transform those spoken words into written text to study” (Seidman, 2006, p. 114). Therefore, the researcher had to interpret the participants' words from reliable data in the form of transcriptions. This data forms the most important information that was collected and was later explored via data analyses.

3.5.1.2. Advantages and disadvantages of interviews

Interviews can provide essential information on real-life experiences of people, therefore gaining understanding and meaning of experiences and situations. The researcher's advantages of the interviews were that each participant felt at ease to share personal information very comfortably. This can be related to the participant being in his/her natural setting. Marshall and Rossman (1995, p. 100-101) confirm this in their discussion of advantages of interviews by mentioning that the collection of data occurs in a natural context. More advantages are that interviews are able to collect extensive and real data rapidly; can facilitate analysis, validity, checks and triangulation; and provide for co-operation from other research projects that can be facilitated.

Disadvantages include the time consuming nature of the process; the fact that data is often a result of observing effects, prominent and creative; procedures are difficult to repeat and dependant on the researcher's variance and this can be dangerous for the researcher's interviews which are highly dependent on the researcher's ability to be resourceful and unbiased; and are also directly dependant on the honesty of the participants by providing the data.

Swanson and Holton (2005) argue that an interview is a significant data collection method for qualitative research as they "are better suited for collecting, analysing, and interpreting respondent constructions than quantitative methods, because they are immediate, processual, elaborative and amendable to inter-subjective interpretations" (Swanson & Holton, 2005, p. 231).

3.5.2 OBSERVATION

The researcher had selected the observation of participants' Facebook profiles as another approach to collect data about the phenomenon that is explored, namely students' participation on FB and how it may relate to the construction of identity by a group of students. "Observation is the process of gathering open-ended, first-hand information by observing people and places at the research site" (Creswell, 2012, p. 213). The goal therefore, according to Cohen et al. (2007), is that the investigator can gather "live" data from a natural context within social situations, during the research process (Cohen et al., 2007, p. 396).

The Facebook (FB) profiles have been described in the previous chapter and the participants' FB profiles were observed over a period of two months, to gain an understanding of their representations online of the identities that they seemed to prefer. Therefore, observation can be described as 'unstructured' in nature, because. “. . . the researcher does not use predetermined categories and classifications, but makes observations in a more natural open-ended way” (Punch, 2009, p. 154). The observations occurred in a natural setting and were not reinforced in any way.

3.5.2.1 Observing participants

As the participants gave informed consent and were aware that the researcher was observing their online profiles, they may or may not have acted differently from usual. The understanding here is that concepts will surface and could be analysed via thematic analysis. This will be further described in the section on data analysis in this chapter. These online profiles of the participants will form important sources of data which might provide to be useful for analysis together with the data emanating from the interview transcripts.

Their FB profiles were observed a month prior to the interview as well as a month after the interview. This allowed the researcher to view their online behaviour in a natural online context. Because this is a unique way of observation, the researcher took this into consideration when drawing up observation criteria in order to have a semi-structured observation method. “In the semi-structured variety of observation you go in with quite specific questions but they are ‘open’ so that you cannot predict what you are going to find” (Gillham, 2008, p. 19). This forms the observation criteria which will be elaborated on in following sections.

3.5.2.2 Observation criteria

The researcher looked towards finding social representations of the participant's reality on the online profile pages of Facebook and looked at the following criteria:

- How many Facebook friends did participants have on average?
- What did the participant say about themselves in the 'About me' section on their profile?
- Private information declared including: a) private particulars, and b) amount of FB friends?

- What trend of information was the participant declaring about themselves to enable a response from their Facebook friends?

The motivation for the above criteria was that the researcher had to view the contextual situation of the participant on Facebook. This included elements of amount of friends that they had online, what they declared about themselves in their online profiles and how much information they provided openly and kept private. Also, what they declared about themselves within their status updates which could range from feelings, reflections and news. This information was particularly important to the researcher as it declared personal characteristics, interests, relationships, friendships and what was occurring in their lives that they wanted others to know. Thus, self-representation declared in an online identity declaration was provided.

3.5.2.3 Advantages and disadvantages of observation

Kawulich (2005) suggests advantages and disadvantages of using observation as a data collection method (Kawulich, 2005, pp. 13-15). The advantages are that observation allows for a rich detailed description which includes behaviours, situations and events; it provides opportunities for participants to be viewed in undetermined events; and it improves the quality of data collection and interpretation to facilitate new developments for research for the future. Disadvantages include that different researchers may miss important information when they miss data that occurs beyond their key participants; and that these participants may be selected according to preference and as a result the researcher may be biased to the data collected.

3.6 DATA ANALYSIS

The transcriptions of all the interviews and the observation of participants profile pages were utilised for analysis for this research study. This enabled the researcher to review the data provided in the semi-structured interviews and to obtain the relevant observation data. A process of thematic analysis was used to understand and unpack the data. The particular occurrences made by the researcher was sorted into themes and an overview of the phenomena that was researched is created from details (Terre Blanche et al., 2006, p. 51).

3.6.1 THEMATIC ANALYSIS

Thematic analysis should be seen as a foundational method for qualitative analysis which searches for patterns or themes within the research study. "Thematic analysis is a method for

identifying, analysing and reporting patterns” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 79). This occurs when the researcher identifies themes and patterns fixed throughout the interviews and observation episodes. The researcher decides which themes are of interest and reports them to their readers, therefore the researcher creates the links of the themes discovered. “This framework is not designed at the expense of content but, rather as a way to deepen the study and meaning of content” (Jewett, 2007, p. 165).

“Thematic analysis can be an essentialist or realist method, which reports experiences, meanings and the reality of participants, or it can be a constructionist method, which examines the ways in which events, realities, meanings, experiences and so on are the effects of a range of discourses operating within society” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 81). Braun and Clarke (2006) argue this method is very useful for an under-researched area. The process of noting themes includes the acts of 1) identifying, 2) coding, and 3) analysing in order to have a thematic analysis method.

3.6.2 TWO PRIMARY WAYS OF DOING THEMATIC ANALYSIS EXIST

- a) An inductive approach occurs when the themes identified are closely linked to the data itself. Therefore, there is not a decided coding frame for themes.
- b) A theoretical or deductive approach occurs when the researcher is directed by the analytic or theoretical interest in the particular area and thus; it is more clearly analyst driven. This occurs when there is comprehensive analysis of some characteristics of the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006, pp. 83-84).

The researcher utilised the theoretic/deductive approach of investigating the data presented by the participants from the interviews and the observations. Hence, the researcher investigated the research area from a theoretical perspective and conducted an intensive analysis process.

3.6.3 LEVELS OF IDENTIFYING THEMES WITHIN THE RESEARCH DATA

According to Braun and Clarke (2006) there are two different classifications of identifying patterns within research data. They include:

- a) A semantic or explicit level of classification happens when themes are located within explicit or superficial meanings within the data and the researcher is not searching for anything afar from what a participant has directly reported on.

b) At a latent level the researcher starts to locate and scrutinize underlying thoughts, expectations and conceptualizations – and philosophies – that are thought about as determining or informing the semantic content of the data.

The researcher had selected the latent level of identifying themes within the research data and worked according to the following phases to analyse the themes.

3.6.4 IMPLEMENTING THE ANALYSIS OF THEMES

The process of thematic analysis is one that requires time and intensive focus. The researcher had focused on an interpretive-constructivist paradigm and therefore, depended on the data presented during the interviews as well as the observation of the online FB profile pages.

Figure 4 provides the summary of the process of conducting thematic analysis:

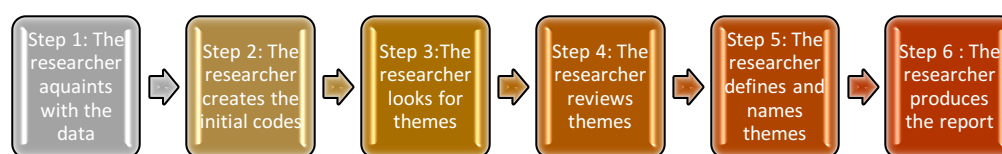


Figure 4. Conducting Thematic Analysis

In the first step, the researcher consulted the data in a meaningful way in searching for patterns. It is important for all the data to be transcribed in order for thematic analysis to be conducted and meanings are therefore created in the transcriptions. It is imperative that the researcher acknowledges that the constructionist thematic analysis process does not need the exact details when transcribing a conversation. In the second step, after the researcher read the data, an immediate list of ideas were created. An initial coding system is started to recognise a characteristic of the data (semantic, content or latent) which has meaning in the information provided. The researcher then identified common trends using colour to highlight particular areas.

In step 3, the researcher searched for themes and all data were coded and various codes are represented among the data. Various codes may join to represent similar codes and this is available as Addendum E. The main themes need to be portrayed as well as sub themes. In step 4, a set of themes have been developed by the researcher and now needs to be worked on to do

a comparison and narrowed down into specific themes. This process can be referred to as “refinement”, namely that there should be concise and recognisable distinctions between them. Two levels exist when refining themes: a) participant themes should produce a comprehensible pattern, and b) individual themes need to be validated against commonality in the data set and thus, the thematic map should reflect meanings accurately documented as a whole.

Step 5 occurs when the researcher has an accurate thematic map of all data. The researcher defined and explored themes and “identified the essence” of what every theme represents. Every theme requires a detailed analysis, hence a story needs to be incorporated within the theme and so, and very importantly this must fit into the overall research story. At the end of this phase, themes need to be clearly defined into recognisable words that the reader can understand. Finally, Step 6 is when the final report is produced which entails: a collection of full themes are provided in the final report after the final analysis process. The aim of this report is to produce the data to the reader so that it is reliable and valid. The story needs to represent the analysis of the data to provide the prevalence of the theme and this to be provided in an argumentative way that represents the answer to the researched questions (Braun & Clarke, 2006, pp. 87-93).

Jewett (2007, p. 169) claims that “[T]his interconnected and reflective process provides important insights into relationships between power, representation, agency, and the stories of people’s lives”.

3.7 DATA VERIFICATION

As aforementioned, the data was analysed, and categorised according to the above phases. This occurs in such a manner that the data will provide the detailed thematic process of the transcriptions of the individual interviews as well as the observation of the participant’s profile pages on Facebook.

Reflexivity was important for the researcher to maintain within the analysis process. This includes that the researcher needs to constantly self-reflect on the process of being “an inquirer as well as respondent” and so to critically reflect on the research process (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p. 124). The researcher reflected on notes taken during the research process which included the data collected.

Triangulation was utilised for the importance of an in-depth understanding of the data collected. This was done by the researcher to validate the multi-methods of data collection and secure this understanding (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 5). This occurred by utilising the data shared during the interviews, observation of profile pages including the additional information shared about the participant in the “About me” section on the Facebook profile page.

For the researcher to be reflexive a rigorous research process is needed to ensure to attend to matters of trustworthiness. Trustworthiness embodies complying with concepts as credibility, dependability, transferability and confirmability in a research study. Validity in qualitative research is usually referred to as trustworthiness (Hays & Singh, 2012, p. 192). Similarly, “Validity is defined by the extent to which operational definition is a true reflection of the conceptual definition” (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999, p. 51). It is agreed that data should obtain the meaning of what indeed the researcher is perceiving (Terre Blanche et al., 2006). This is the overall goal of the qualitative researcher to prove as authentic and therefore dependable research that has been conducted. In retrospect, the truthfulness of your study can be deemed valid when your research is based on the voice of your participants in the specific context as maximum findings and conclusions (Hays & Singh, 2012, p. 192). Babbie and Mouton (2001) refer to trustworthiness as being the neutrality of its findings (p. 276).

According to Miles and Huberman (1994, cited in Walliman, 2011), there are three concurrent flows of action that they suggest which assist in the data analysis process which are: 1) data reduction, 2) data display, and 3) conclusion drawing/data verification (Walliman, 2011). During the data analysis period, it was imperative to reduce the large amount of data, display it in an appropriate format as well as rounding up all relevant data through coding, simplifying and summarizing the data. The researcher therefore identified themes within the content rich data. Themes were classified and would hopefully link to the Social Representations Theory as provided in Chapter 2 which identified characteristics of that which the individual was noted for. Thus, identity was explored in this particular way of the relevant individual.

I now will expand on the following criteria that I utilised to achieve trustworthiness to verify my data. This criteria includes credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability.

Credibility refers to “does it ring true”? (Babbie & Mouton, 2001, p. 277). That is when the researcher engages with the data to obtain the interpretation and this is the credibility of the

study. Hays and Singh (2012) also refer to credibility as one of the imperative criteria qualitative researchers utilise to ensure that inferences are understandable for a qualitative research. The analysis should therefore gauge the information of the participants ultimately. Also, the attempt to generate credible knowledge lies at the crux of any dialogue (Silverman, 2006, p. 275). The researcher gained the interpretation of the research participants as detailed and therefore gaged the credibility of the study. It was done by prolonged engagement in the field until data saturation was obtained. Triangulation was also achieved within the interviews as the researcher asked various questions, with various methods and sources.

Transferability refers to how research findings of a sample relate to a population and thus external validity is reached (Hays & Singh, 2012, p. 200). It is therefore critical that the data extracts selected are representative of the data as a whole (Silverman, 2006, p. 276). The data is a sample of the collective and represents a population, so therefore a representative sample of first year students at a TVET College. Stake (1990) refers to transferability as a naturalistic generalizability within qualitative research (cited in Hays & Singh, 2012, p. 201). The sample for this study was a purposive sample and according to Denzin and Lincoln (1994, cited in Silverman, 2006), most qualitative researchers adopt a purposive sampling method, rather than random so as to look for patterns in individuals or groups where developments are being studied (Silverman, 2006). The researcher conducted the study in one TVET College via a purposive sampling method, but the methodology can be applied to any other higher educational institution in South Africa among a first year student population.

Dependability within qualitative research refers to when the study can be repeated with a parallel sample of subjects within a parallel field and the findings will therefore be the same (Babbie & Mouton, 2001, p. 278). Thus, the researcher conducted this research within a TVET college with a sample of first year students and it can then also be conducted within any college context.

Confirmability refers to the concept of objectivity where the researcher's findings are original reflections of the participants who were investigated. This is important as the researcher needs to "listen to the data" and provide the exact information during the analysis process (Hays & Singh, 2012, p. 201). This is a critical step in the data verification process and as the researcher, I ensured this process was followed as, during the interviews, I clarified concepts and

summarised information that the participants provided in order to capture their information correctly.

Through the data verification process, it is imperative as a researcher to be guided by ethical considerations as the human element is considered throughout the study.

3.8 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

As researchers working with people's opinions and personal information, we need to be aware of the rights of people and respect them as so. As previously referred to in Chapter 1, Wiersma and Jurs (2009) support this by saying: "Because human participants are involved, ethical and legal considerations are of concern" (Wiersma & Jurs, 2009).

Before conducting the research, the researcher was required to seek permission from the educational institution. The head of the TVET College in Cape Town, Western Cape was approached and negotiations occurred to gain entry and declare an appropriate time to implement the study. Permission was granted by the head of the institution and a letter of permission was provided by the educational institution (Appendix G).

An application to the Research Ethical Committee (REC) of Stellenbosch University was submitted. Ethical clearance was granted by the committee on 25 August 2015 (see Appendix A).

The individuals involved in this research study were informed of the aims and objectives of the study, as described previously. Participation was thus voluntary and none of the participants were coerced into participating. Informed consent was obtained from every participant who all were over the legal age of eighteen years and were informed that they could decline at any time (Appendix B). "Informed consent refers to the participants being fully informed about the research and their expected role in it" (Daniels, 2008, p. 119). The time with them did not disrupt their current classes and permission for and time of meeting was scheduled with the applicable campus including the Programme Manager and relevant lecturers at the institution.

The researcher explained the aims and objectives of the study and the participants completed and signed the form. Participants were also informed that their identity would be protected by using pseudonyms, and therefore confidentiality was adhered to.

Check and Schutt (2012) mention that researchers should make a considerate effort in protecting the identities as well as the material of the participants from being published and do so where necessary to prevent identity disclosure” (Check & Schutt, 2012, p. 209). In light of confidentiality, the participants were provided pseudonyms to protect their identity and not be identifiable when providing information about themselves. Also, the educational institution has been kept confidential as well so as to prevent identification.

Informed consent and confidentiality was strictly adhered to in terms of accessing the participant’s profile pages on Facebook. This is imperative as their profiles consists of personal information and although Facebook is a public domain, it is the decision of the individual to what can be viewed. Careful consideration was also taken in this regard that should the researcher have noticed any signs of psychological concern or distress, she would have referred the student immediately to the TVET College’s Student Support Services Department.

Confidentiality also refers to the storing of data collected during the research. The data that was collected from the participants was and is currently stored on the researcher’s password protected computer. Raw data and transcripts will also be stored for five years after the research study has been completed.

3.9 CONCLUSION

The objective of this chapter has been to provide an overall description for conducting the research. What was imperative to the researcher to conduct this plan of action, was to incorporate a research methodology that contributes towards the research study. Therefore, the researcher had to adopt a research design that enabled her to answer the research questions.

The aim of this research was to explore the construction of first year TVET College students’ identity and how utilising the popular social networking site, Facebook, contributed to this. In the next chapter, the findings of this study will be presented and discussed.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION, DISCUSSION AND FINDINGS

People have really gotten comfortable not only sharing more information and different kinds, but more openly and with more people - and that social norm is just something that has evolved over time.

Mark Zuckerberg (cited in Johnson, 2010)

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter includes the data presentation and discussion that establishes a range of responses from different sources (interviews and observations). The participants involved in this research study included first year students at a TVET College in the Western Cape.

The research questions for this study are as follows:

Main research question: How does Facebook contribute to a sense of identity in first year students at a TVET College?

The sub questions include:

1. How do first year TVET College students construct their identity?
2. How do first year TVET College students present their identity by engaging on Facebook?
3. When first year TVET College students engage on Facebook, how can this contribute to their sense of identity?

These questions were aimed towards obtaining an understanding of the process of identity construction in first year students. Questions were asked of students who willingly consented to participation, during semi-structured interviews. It is therefore particularly important to understand the background of the group of participants including the college context.

The college's significant history contributes to the developing context for these students. As referred to in Chapter two, the college's challenging past is also an imperative part of this research study.

4.2 DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION OF PARTICIPANTS

The sample in the study was selected purposefully as they included first year students registered within the TVET Sector. They all willingly engaged within an individual interview at an appropriate time which did not interfere with their subject time. The Campus Manager and Programme Manager provided the appropriate time slots for the interviews as referred to in Chapter three.

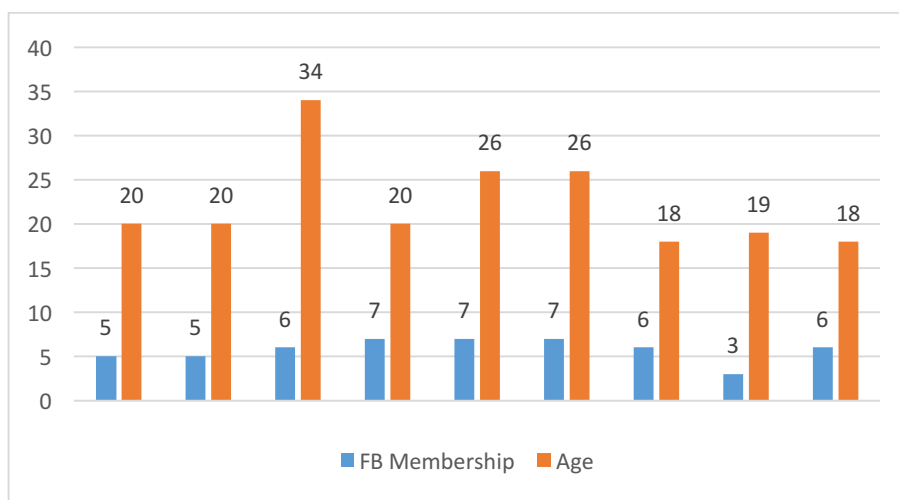
Table 4.1

Demographic Information of Sample

NO.	AGE	RACE	GENDER	COURSE
1	20	BLACK	FEMALE	NCV L2 MARKETING
2	20	BLACK	FEMALE	NCV L2 MARKETING
3	34	COLOURED	FEMALE	INTRO N4 CLOTHING PRODUCTION
4	20	COLOURED	FEMALE	NCV L2 MARKETING
5	26	COLOURED	FEMALE	NCV L2 AUTOMOTIVE ENGINEERING
6	26	BLACK	MALE	INTRO N4 CLOTHING PRODUCTION
7	18	COLOURED	MALE	NCV L2 FINANCE, ECONOMICS & ACCOUNTING
8	19	COLOURED	FEMALE	INTRO N4 CLOTHING PRODUCTION
9	18	COLOURED	FEMALE	NCV L2 FINANCE, ECONOMICS & ACCOUNTING

There were nine participants who engaged in the interviews and allowed their FB profile pages to be viewed. Initially 13 students showed interest in participating and signed the consent forms, but four did not participate in the interviews. The above sample represents a first year population at a TVET college, predominantly average age of twenty years; Coloured South Africans; female; studying Clothing Production or Marketing.

Table 4.2

Facebook Membership and Age of the Participants

According to the Facebook page, the allowed age of creating a profile page on their social networking site is at 13 years which is available in their “Terms of Service” on www.facebook.com (see Appendix D). With the exception of the 34 and 26 years of age, most of the participants started on Facebook in the early adolescent stage of their lives which shows that they have experience being on a social networking site. As referred to in the literature review, this age has reference to the following stages of Erikson’s psychosocial stages of development:

- Seventh year to puberty – industry versus inferiority: In this stage a child has to learn to feel confident in his or her own activities and feel competent in activities valued by others.
- Adolescence – identity versus role confusion: In this stage the peer group is extremely important as a child begins to develop a sense of identity in relation to his or her peer group (Cole et al., 2005).

There is then a predominant correlation in the above stages as many of the participants started to engage on Facebook at the average age of 13 years and needed to feel valued by others as well as establishing a sense of identity in respect of the social group online. They have also been active Facebook members for an average amount of seven years predominantly. This portrays a significant inclination to time spent online as well as a possible sense of identity that could have been created from the participant’s FB profile that has grown and developed with them.

The following themes have deemed prevalent within the data presented by the participants was coded according to the thematic analysis process as explained in Chapter 3. I shall present these themes and sub themes that surfaced during thematic analysis, in table format before I shall describe it in more detail. The themes that were found to be common among the sample were used because of frequency that occurred.

Table 4.3: *Table of Themes*

REAL WORLD IDENTITY	ONLINE IDENTITY	ONLINE SELF IN RELATION TO OTHERS	PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS OF ONLINE ACTIVITIES
REAL WORLD SELF <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Admit to the influence of technology as a front No real friendships Resilient Overcame challenges Has goals and dreams PERSONAL VIEW <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Involves other's/family's views judgement of selves Values REAL TRUTH <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No pretending Not confident 	ONLINE WORLD SELF <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Exaggerated and confident Connected to others Pretending Real vs Virtual (confirmed difference between this) TIME SPENT ONLINE <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Everyday Time catcher VIRTUAL TRUTH <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Trusting the online process as the truth, feeling safe Different to reality/fairy-tale (seeming paradoxical understanding of truth and reality) ONLINE GROUPS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Passive association (likes group, but no active engagement) CYBERBULLYING <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hacking of accounts ONLINE TRAUMA <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Loss of a loved one 	HELPING OTHERS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advice and Motivation LEARNING ABOUT OTHERS & LIFE <ul style="list-style-type: none"> See things online FAMILY <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Feel close to them as they are far away 	SELF-PROTECTION <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teaching others valuable life lessons Limitation of privacy settings Online rules should be provided NEW GENERATION <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facebook newsfeed SELF-AWARENESS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Roots of heritage questioned Authentic self not being lived according to the perceived self

4.3 MAIN THEMES

Thematic analysis made it possible to identify similarities in the data and group them according to the developing themes in the study. The researcher assured that there was no repetition within the main themes and created sub-themes for further clarity. As indicated in Table 4.3, the following formed the four main themes together with the sub-themes. This was then further explored by the researcher in adding direct quotes from the participants to substantiate the identified themes.

4.3.1 REAL WORLD IDENTITY

Within this theme, three sub-themes are to be found, each consisting of several codes that referred to the sub-theme headings. The first sub-theme was named a **Real world self**; secondly **The participant's personal view** and lastly, **The real truth**.

4.3.1.1 Real world self

The **real world self** sub-theme provided information about admitting to the influence of technology as a front; having no real friendships; being resilient; overcoming challenges and having goals and dreams. I shall provide participants' direct quotes to substantiate this sub-theme. The first theme included that the participants admitted to the influence of technology as providing the opportunity to present a front, instead of their real self, implying that they consider having a real world self as opposed to another "self" becoming possible on social media:

Yes there is a difference. Because when I tend to meet someone facially, first of all, I need to make sure that I'm safe, and I need to know like I'm very observant person, and I become so quiet and you will even say on Facebook I was so talkative, but now why am I quiet, because you're a stranger, so I don't feel safe. (Participant 1)

. . . they must know the profile that I am there on Facebook only and not all my personal life there, so I just put that profile they know, but they don't know anything about me. (Participant 2)

It's (referring to online personality) really confident. Like generally that's the reason why the internet is so popular, that's why social media's so popular I think because you can hide behind the screen. I'm able to interact with people who normally . . . if I saw

them in real life, I'd be so shy, I wouldn't even bother looking at them so. (Participant 9)

Facebook is a place where you can seem . . . you can be anything you wanna be because you decide what everyone sees of you. (Participant 7)

The participants therefore referred to utilising the internet as another personality that they used when they were online and admitting that they would not appear like this when meeting someone face-to-face. This could relate to Erikson's stage of identity versus role confusion. These students seem to have different identities when online and when offline. Therefore, they seem to be forming different identities and which might lead to confusion in the roles they would like to accept. This is also evident to Wild and Swartz's meaning of identity in that they refer to it as being clear who they are, what they value and believe and what they would like to be one day. They seemed to prefer presenting their online personality more than in face-to face interaction.

The real world self that which the participants are referring to, seem to be questioning their identity as well as searching to belong. This highlights possible questions about the particular age cohort at TVET colleges. Erikson refers to adolescence as a stage of searching for oneself. In the real world, these students question themselves and are not sure how to belong and with this, what their identity is. Sadowski (2004) adds that adolescence is the time for self-discovery and these young people are searching for their significance in life in facing many challenges which they need to overcome.

It would seem as though this phase of uncertainty, of questioning and of self-discovery would correspond with Marcia's identity moratorium phase as Shaffer and Kipp (2010) formulated it. Taylor (2011) described how adolescents are confronted with different components of themselves, how they critically engage with these and seek feedback from the environment about themselves. It would seem as though this theme which emerged from the data, might be a description of how FB allowed the participants to work through this moratorium phase of identity construction.

They also referred to not having real friendships and longed for a sense of belonging from others:

I tend to speak more because in my like world; I don't actually have friends.
(Participant 1)

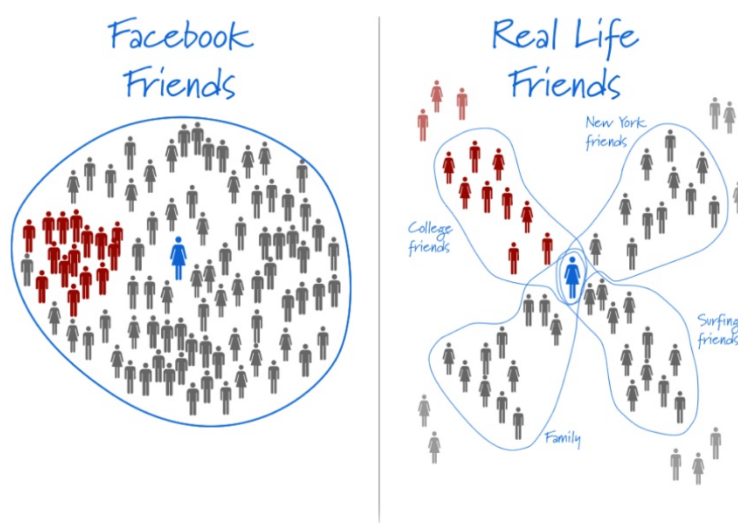
I only have . . . I don't . . . I actually . . . I don't have friends. I only have people I know.
(Participant 8)

First year students at the TVET College are transitioning into the college and having to make new friends. Although, they admitted that they do not have real friendships, which brings up the critical important question: “Are they challenged in obtaining a sense of belonging within the college context?” These students have either left high school, dropped out of school and have been unemployed or have been working and have decided to embark on further studies at the college. The college provides an intensive orientation programme where the Student Support Services Department conducts introduction programmes with first year students. This programme focuses on first years especially with transitioning into the college and a referral system is implemented by providing the students with personal counselling and development (Student Support Services pamphlets with information are provided as Appendix F).

The following illustration provides an overview of the above-mentioned:

Illustration 1

Facebook Friends and Real Life Friends



Participants mentioned being resilient in the real world:

I always stay positive. I believe uhm I can do anything and I like uhm taking challenges . . . (Participant 5)

Uhm very positive person I think I'm a perceptive thinker . . . I don't capitalize on my weaknesses. (Participant 6)

I'm . . . I'm a very resilient person . . . (Participant 6)

The reluctance of “uhm” before being a positive person gave the impression that there might be resilient participants as they referred to being very confident online, but when referring to themselves, they seemed uncertain about being confident, however, rather positive and the researcher will refer to this in more detail under the “online identity” category.

Overcoming challenges in the real world was referred to here:

. . . it is a challenge to accept that you aren't the only person that make or break someone else. So uh in a way it's a good thing having it because people always believe you wouldn't be something without me and when they see that this person has overcome a challenge although you could maybe dry the tears or be there at the time it's a good feeling to know they were strong enough. (Participant 3)

I believe myself as a person that I'm strong and I can overcome any challenge that could come to me . . . (Participant 4)

Every participant had goals and dreams for themselves for their future which was reflected in the interview as well as on their profile page on Facebook:

. . . one day I wish to be a social worker. (Participant 1)

. . . I am very conscious to my brand (referring to himself). (Participant 6)

Most important . . . at the moment it's my studies, life basically revolves around that.
(Participant 9)

This showed the relevance of being at an institution in furthering their careers in life and so searching for the importance in life. The participants had aspirations in completing their studies successfully and becoming well known. It could refer to their goals in life and fulfilling them at a TVET college might present their intentions of being successful in life. The TVET Colleges were initiated to offer higher education which links up to what the job market trends are in making youth employable. The college is thus seen as the gateway to success and their dreams being fulfilled.

4.3.1.2 Personal view

Even though this information was about the **personal view** of the participants, it seemed as though there was a need for involving others' views as a common theme among them:

. . . it's a good thing to know people like what you said, people admire your talents and what comes from your mind, that validation is sometimes also important . . .
(Participant 6)

. . . they will always say positive things and encourage me to go further and whatever.
(Participant 5)

The personal views of the participants were therefore in need of involving alternative views. This implies a need for reciprocal relationships as espoused in the social representations theory outlined in Chapter 2. This centres on people being recognised by certain characteristics of themselves, and does this therefore mean that these characteristics are pieces of others within us in order to have a well-known characteristic? The participants in this study responded positively with regard to their personal view being influenced by others as they depend on it. In this way, it therefore seems that the descriptions of others' views on the particular individual contributes therefore to the representation of the individual, that for which he or she is known. This personal view of including others links together with Erikson's stage of identity versus role confusion which also states that during adolescence the peer group becomes very important to the individual, especially for the development of a sense of identity (Erikson, 1982, p. 72).

It was found that the judgement of themselves through others was prevalent among the group of participants:

Uhm I have my days, sometimes I'm very friendly, sometimes I'm very grumpy, that's what they know. (Participant 8)

. . . in reality you don't have more often people would tell you and advise you even though you ask for help and no one else would help you because they're looking what kind of person are you, they are judging you from what they see. (Participant 2)

. . . because you always think that people's gonna judge you . . . (Participant 5)

The judgement of themselves occurred through the eyes of others viewing them which showed that self-doubt seemed to be apparent and in reality the participants were not confident when engaging with others. The way they present themselves in the virtual relational space seems to maybe have to compensate for insecurities around themselves.

Personal values, which were important to them and that they grew up with and families have taught them, were voiced. These included the importance of being independent, honest and truthful:

That I'm truthful, above everything that I'm truthful and that what you see with me is basically what you get though. (Participant 7)

The most important things to me is uhm, is just to live, like achieve my dreams, be honest with myself and I always stay positive. (Participant 1)

Being a student within a TVET College is centred on doing a vocational course which includes both theory and practice. Therefore, the participants are taught to be independent and work ready when it comes to their careers through personal development and support from Student Support Services developmental workshops and the advice from the lecturing staff.

4.3.1.3 Real truth

This sub-theme referred to the participants' **experience within reality** and what they experience is true and that which they cannot conceal.

The first group of quotes under the topic of the real truth included that the participants could not pretend as the real world self. They couldn't hide anything when they were face-to-face with others:

. . . people know who I am and they know what type of person I am so I'm not gonna do something on Facebook that I know I'm not in the real world. (Participant 8)

. . . when you meet them face-to-face sometimes it doesn't turn out they are real, that they are real as they are on Facebook. (Participant 2)

The participants related this particular theme to themselves without the use of Facebook. They did not separate the two worlds as they mentioned both when providing the feedback. This posed the question if they see themselves in a real world without being online. Their Facebook profiles referred to in Chapter 2 is therefore compensated with their reality and seems as if it cannot be separated from the individual.

Lastly, in this sub-theme it would seem as though the participants experienced having low confidence as the real truth:

It's . . . I'm able to interact with people (referring to being online) who normally if I saw them in real life I's be so shy I wouldn't even bother looking at them so. (Participant 9)

Sometimes it's uhm easier to chat on Facebook, then like to tell someone that you wanna tell someone something in person it's easier to do it on Facebook. (Participant 3)

Participants seemed to make reference to the experience of little confidence whilst implying that being online was a confidence booster. They seemed to be comfortable on Facebook with interacting online but at the same time in reality, they shy away from those that they know online. The background of students, who often hail from adverse circumstances as described earlier, but who are working towards a more positive future vocation, could have lead the participants to attempt to construct alternative and more positive presentations of themselves on-line, than in real life.

Participants referred to experiences being in the real world as their real selves who could not be confident when interacting with others. This inclines the researcher to start thinking about an individual as having an online and an offline identity. One, therefore completely different from the other. Is this possible? Certainly many of the above statements and themes refer to this possibility as more than an assumption. So, if young people experience a real world identity, then an online or virtual identity may also surface. Thus, the construction of TVET College student's identity may include both online and offline activities. The construction of these two different identities or ways of viewing and presenting themselves cannot be separated, as it may contribute to an integrated way of thinking about themselves. Confusion might however also be part of this process of construction of an identity or identities.

Resistance seemed to be a common factor of note among this TVET college group of first year students and a popular word associated with young people in general. The researcher cited Howarth (2006) who highlighted this phenomenon in her theoretical exposition of Social Representations Theory. Often, young people are misunderstood and tend to react in confusing ways to others. They are still discovering who they are in being in the real world as well as their online identity.

4.3.2 ONLINE IDENTITY

This main theme had five sub-themes which included: **Online world self**, **Time spent online**, **Virtual truth**, **Online groups**, **Cyberbullying**, and **Online trauma**.

4.3.2.1 Online world self

The first theme is that being online refers to having an exaggerated and confident online world:

. . . it's not a proper extension of who I am, it's a characteristic that I exaggerate on Facebook. (Participant 7)

. . . it's really a confidence booster for me because people always tend to validate my knowledge and to validate my wisdom . . . (Referring to being online) (Participant 6)

Like differently online like I said I'd be much more friendly, open to conversation, confident but if those same people had to come up to me, start a conversation, maybe even the exact conversation we had on the internet, I would totally blank out . . . (Participant 9)

These comments make apparent that being online refers to acting in a certain way and being accepted for who you are online as you are able to hide your physical presence. As mentioned in Chapter 2, Facebook allows the individual to create a profile and then connect with other profiles. In creating a profile, the individual is allowed to place any information to be viewed by others and therefore, be recognised by these characteristics online.

Acceptance by others also made participants feel connected to others:

Connected to the world. (Participant 4)

For me to be on Facebook, it means to be connected for life. (Participant 7)

Like the people on there sometimes you feel like you connect with people better through the internet. (Participant 1)

These participants led the researcher to believe that this online world self was feeling connected more within the virtual world than in reality where they felt that they didn't connect to anyone and didn't have real friendships. Reference to Arnett's (2007) stage of emerging adulthood with the five stages including exploring identity, insecurity, self-determination, feeling unbalanced and future prospects seem appropriate to inform the needs expressed by the participants, and which were fulfilled within their virtual selves. Therefore, if the individual can obtain all of this online, but not offline, then they might experience self-acceptance and continue with being confident online. Therefore, an online representation allows for the contribution towards self-acceptance and therefore possibly a preferred sense of identity can be formed by active online engagement.

Reid and Boyer (2013, p.246) claim the following: "If one's self-presentation is uncomfortable or rejected, they more easily avoid face-to-face criticism by rapidly exploring alternative identities. This instantaneous feedback and ability to redesign one's identity allows FB users to actively combine speaking, writing, acting, interacting, feeling, believing, valuing, dressing, illustrating, and expressing in a particular way".

Pretending as the online real self:

Actually sometimes it's not the same cause you just meet someone you chat with on Facebook and you meet up with them, as you can see some of them fake their profiles and when you personally see the person that you meet it's a very, very different person that you were chatting on Facebook so sometimes it very great, sometimes it turns out very bad. (Participant 2)

I could describe them as strangers, they are strangers, because most of my friends on Facebook are strangers, so they like pics and they comment their comments so I don't know anything about them and they don't know anything about me, they just like everything I do. (Participant 2)

People are dependent on my input when it comes to fashion, when it comes to motivating them and I don't even know these people. (Participant 6)

This was often found among the participant's responses in referring to another world which is a virtual world and constant pretence among people online that occur. The researcher sensed that trust was important to all participants when interacting with others, and that even though the awareness of fake profiles were noticed, they still believed that their friendships online was true.

Participants experience the difference between real versus virtual:

Face-to-face it's more emotional and that. So I have to be . . . you have to be fast you have to be on your feet like think on your feet and stuff and I can't deal with all of that at once. It's too much for me. (Participant 9)

The virtual world's much more extreme than in reality, it's downright vicious . . . (Participant 9)

It therefore seems that the participants are fully aware of these differences between real and virtual, but nevertheless find what they need in the two ways of thinking about themselves and presenting themselves. It would seem as though the control they have about their identities on FB opposes the seeming lack of power and control they might experience in real life.

4.3.2.2 Time spent online

Participants accessed Facebook every day and even referred to it as a time catcher. Most of them have also been active members of FB for at least 6 years:

I will go on Facebook every day. (Participant 5)

It's mostly a timewaster for me. (Participant 9)

I'm quite committed to Facebook. (Participant 3)

4.3.2.3 Virtual truth

Participants referred to this theme because of their time spent online, they felt that being on Facebook implied accepting this platform as truth. It seemed as though the participants trust the online process as the truth, feeling safe whilst being actively engaged online.

I know what kind of people I am dealing with and I always have a response to them . . . (Participant 1)

This participant had earlier referred to not having friends in reality nor online, but the above response referred to that she/he knows the people that they know online.

So to me it's like an identity that's just there for people to know about you or a little about you that they wouldn't necessarily pick up if they meet you or anywhere else. (Participant 7)

Trusting people, it's quite easy, I think I've learnt to realize it's so easy for a person to say whoever you are or want to on Facebook . . . (Participant 4)

These first year students mentioned trusting the online process as reality and therefore allowing for the virtual world as a platform for a sense of belonging which they seem to be crying out for. This is an imperative part of the study that was noteworthy for the researcher because of the particular age group as well as the permanency of participants having long memberships to Facebook. This also relates to the transformation within the colleges sector. The past

inequalities left the colleges disadvantaged and as a result not many students had access to resources. Thus, the ever changing environment of the colleges can also be very relevant to the experiences of these first year students.

The view that the online world is different to reality, more like fantasy and comparing it to a fairytale, also surfaced.

Sometimes you can make it a fairytale on Facebook or whatever online chats you on or whatever you can make it a fairytale but in the real world it's not gonna happen like that so there's no actual link. (Participant 8)

Facebook is a place where you can seem . . . you can be anything you wanna be because you decide what everyone sees of you. What you post, what you make public, it's like no one else can dictate for you. Even if someone tags you in something that you don't like you can remove it. You can create this entire persona for yourself. (Participant 9)

The participants referred to being on Facebook as a fairytale and this could refer to presenting themselves in ways adjusting to own needs as well as the needs of the people that they befriend online. This is relevant to the researcher's question about online identity among TVET college first year students because they seem to be searching for acceptance from others and a place to belong. Therefore, it seems that an online identity may develop dependant on the participant's online profile and the interaction with online friends.

4.3.2.4 Online groups

All participants belonged to online social groups on Facebook. The following were groups that they belonged to, based on personal interest:

- Anime
- Poetry club
- Fashion
- Faith-based groups
- Political empowerment
- Previous school
- Community group

These participants belonged to the groups, but admitted it was only for association and not for active engagement. None of these participants belonged to their TVET College's Facebook page which is updated on a regular basis with student opportunities and relevant information. As well as no association made to the TVET College that they were all attending. This begs questions regarding their perception of the college they attend. Did they not feel that they were part of the college community? Maybe they did not know about the College's FB page or they did not want to be associated with the College. Seeing the differentiation in the participants' understanding of "real world selves" and "virtual selves", with some overt benefits to a virtual self, it might be that the College being very much part of the real world, does not offer the same benefits, even in participation on the College's FB page. Eberhardt (2007) noted this in his study where he uncovered that college students did not experience belonging to the college community. He highlighted that college students would share the emotions on their Facebook profile page very comfortably and be able to access each other's profile pages with excitement as they were able to connect because of the common emotions (Eberhardt, 2007, p. 19). They were therefore able to provide representations of themselves and be identifiable as a result on FB, which confirms the value of relationships formed on FB and the preferred social representations of themselves which developed there.

4.3.2.5 Cyberbullying

Two prominent themes were discovered in the data, with regard to negative experiences in the virtual world of FB.

A prominent theme were participants reflected on feeling violated and exposed during their accounts being hacked by someone else, was visible in the data.

I felt . . . I actually felt really crap, if I can say that word. I felt crap because imagine someone stealing a really beautiful photo of you, just as you are now, and taking it and putting it on and pretending to be someone else and pretending to be something that is the total opposite of you. (Participant 4)

There was one time where a friend of mine used my Facebook account to post hateful comments on someone that she didn't like, picture or something and I knew that the girl wasn't so impressed. (Participant 9)

. . . I actually have one friend, she's actually my cousin, that another girl took her profile. So, I'm just scared for that made it hers. Her profile pics on Facebook and stuff. So, I'm just scared for that and then also for someone uploading something very nasty about me that I'm not. (Participant 8)

The majority of participants (7/9) reported on incidents that occurred to them or someone close to them, where cyberbullying and the posting of hateful comments were common. These students never received any debriefing for the events that occurred. The way in which they reported these incidents demonstrated how they overcame the incidents in individual ways, albeit still experiencing underlying negative emotions and regret. These students were individually advised to seek counselling from their Student Support Services department at their respective campuses.

4.3.2.6 Online trauma

One of the participants experienced trauma by receiving news online about a loss of a loved one.

I lost someone in a car accident . . . I was online and I was in the group (community group) and saw this picture. It was my ex-boyfriend and that hit me because his parents did not know about it, but this community group knew about it first. The worst part about it is the community takes this visualization and they take the picture of the accident, how it happened because the people that is on the scene and I think that also hit me. (Participant 4)

The reason why the researcher highlighted this theme, was because there have been a few occurrences where traumatic news was made available online during 2014-2015 at this particular TVET College. At the time debriefing sessions with affected students have been conducted. Although these occurrences were not mentioned in the specific data gathered in this study, the researcher had been sensitized to the potential of traumatic experiences via social media. Personal experiences of the researcher could therefore also have influenced the meaning-making of the data in this study.

The above-mentioned findings nevertheless provide answers to the researcher's question on TVET College first year students presenting their identity by engaging on Facebook. Active engagement online for all participants contributes to their self, and therefore identity. This demonstrates that this group of students might have alternative identities that they present on Facebook which is more confident, motivated and which implies a sense of belonging.

4.3.3 ONLINE SELF IN RELATION TO OTHERS

This main theme centred on the way the online identities are related to other people during online engagement. The sub-themes included **Helping others; Learning about others and life, People and Family**.

4.3.3.1 Helping others

Participants referred to ways in which they provide advice and motivation to others as well as communicate with others. Others in this case were identified as online friends:

... I'm there to look for jobs for people who need it and then I will take the information and give it to those who need the information. (Participant 1)

And uhm no I think the best is that you can actually socialize with someone that if you were in South Africa and they in another country and you can still have a good conversation. (Participant 3)

The researcher discovered that participants wanted to engage with others from all around the world as well as assist them by looking for relevant information and providing it to them. This could add to a sense of being valuable and helpful which seems to be possible to the virtual self. This could once again refer to the ability to feel a sense of belonging to an online community as aforementioned. It is therefore evident that their online identity seems to be one that is bolder than the offline identity, as it seems to be anchored in social relationships.

4.3.3.2 Learning about others and life

The sub-theme refers to the possibility of keeping abreast of new information online as well as to being able to know what is going on in other's lives:

. . . reading everyone else's issues which is still very much entertaining, and I guess it's to learn. (Participant 3)

. . . we have become so vulnerable to the information that we see online because it is documented on our monitors and we believe it's the truth. (Participant 6)

For these participants, they believe in viewing what others get up to on the Facebook newsfeed (refers to all online FB friends information page) rather than seeing the individual to know what is happening. This once more highlights how the effects of the virtual world, like the ease of acquiring information, can change ways that the participants engage socially.

4.3.3.3 Family

Participants voiced the importance of family in most of their lives. This was particularly so in cases where families were living far away. This provided important incentives for accessing FB, and communicating through FB.

To be in contact with my family as they live in Port Elizabeth, Jo'Burg and it's cheaper to be on Facebook than to make personal calls. (Participant 5)

. . . family members that lived far, lived very far, and I have stayed in contact with them and got to see my cousin's pictures, how they have grown, cause you're not every day in contact with family where you seem them over weekends always. (Participant 4)

This seemed particularly significant as they chose Facebook to stay in touch as a means of communication and connection. This finding highlights a need that some TVET College students might experience with staying far away from their immediate and extended families. It would seem as though Facebook provides the most effective way of keeping in touch with loved ones.

This group of TVET College students utilise Facebook as a strong connection to a virtual world where their engagement contributes towards their sense of identity. This virtual world includes family, friends and strangers, and this seems to also be a world where they felt they are needed and useful. Their sense of identity seemed to imply being included and valued.

4.3.4 PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS OF ONLINE ACTIVITIES

The last main theme is constituted by three sub-themes which focus on the effects of online activities on which participants reflected. The sub-themes are: **Self-protection**, **New generation**, and **Self-awareness**.

4.3.4.1 Self-protection

Participants reported learning from negative online experiences and provided advice for others on while being online. This enabled them to teach others valuable life lessons based on their own negative online experiences:

So Facebook does have a positive, but I feel majority it has a negative effect. Facebook is allowing things they've got-they not putting their foot down and they don't have control over the site itself anymore. Uhm and that's where self-being is being lost. I think it's also as a human being you should know better that's where you'd rather stand still. (Participant 3)

. . . be careful of who you let in to your social media circles especially...try to do your own research and always be level headed whenever you go on social media! (Participant 7)

. . . the thing about Facebook is I've learned that it . . . depending on how you use it can either help you or tear you down. In my case it helped me a lot. It helped me become more confident but when you get people who share a bit too much of their lives and people start to tear them down. (Participant 4)

These participants reflected on their own experiences and concentrated on sharing the lessons that they have learned. Precautionary measures against possible negative effects were emphasised within the interviews.

In relation to self-protection, the limitations of privacy settings on the Facebook profile page were mentioned. Whilst observing the online profile pages, it was noticed that every FB member is allowed to set up his or her profile page with relevant information which is called the "About me" section. This includes name, surname, contact number, e-mail address, photos,

online groups associated to, family member's names online and many more. This information is available for anyone who can type in the member's name and surname.

The researcher viewed all personal information of all the participants without their acceptance friends. This demonstrated that their private information was available for anyone to see. This included cell phone numbers, residential addresses, and e-mail addresses. Therefore, even though many participants in the research study had negative online experiences, their information was still available to anyone which means no precautionary measures were taken to protect their personal information. Facebook's privacy policy states that all information that the members provide is not protected by Facebook as a company (www.facebook.com/privacysettings). Therefore, the Facebook page admits to the limitation of privacy settings on their page for all members who provide their evidence.

Many participants also requested a common theme of online rules to be provided to all people accessing SNS's.

You think you know Facebook, some of us think we know Facebook what's going on there but most of the people don't know cause some of them post explicit pictures there like yah. Like you must feel free cause it's your page. There's no one there who's going to cyberbully you or anything. We should learn more. They should tell us more about how to use social networks yah. (Participant 2)

Participants referred to being knowledgeable on responsible online behaviour including what to look out for and how to handle it. This therefore refers to an important need in a new generation of young people.

4.3.4.2 New generation

Participants declared that they feel part of a new cohort of people when the researcher asked about the meaning of Facebook to the participants. In this sub-theme emphasis was placed on Facebook newsfeeds as a means of access to nationwide news.

. . . I'm part of the new age movement, uh it means that I'm empowered . . . (Participant 6)

That I'm part of the new generation, I would say, cause I'm up to date with a lot of things, cause sometimes you don't know what's going on in the world and see it over Facebook newsfeed uhm other nationwide news other people sharing news they don't share maybe with you over the cell phone so they spread it over the world. (Participant 7)

. . . to read news because Facebook always gives news updates. . . Yeah Facebook is one of my sources for keeping updated. (Participant 2)

Adolescence and young adulthood make up the dominant group of students at an academic institution, like a TVET College. Therefore these participants reported to being part of a new generation similar to a new movement. This can mean that the needs of these participants may differ from what it used to be. Participants also admitted to staying informed about world news through the social networking site Facebook as a way of staying informed. The strong alliance with a “new” generation does have implications for the participants’ identity constructions. It would seem as though the participants differentiate themselves from implied older generations, using new and different ways of knowing the world and themselves, and therefore being different, avant garde and maybe in control of their lives. Sadowski (2004) makes reference in his research when he says that adolescence is a time for self-discovery and adolescents are searching for their importance in the world (Sadowski, 2004, p. 3). This raises concern regarding the participants’ self-awareness, which will be addressed by the last sub-theme.

4.3.4.3 Self-awareness

This sub-theme focused on the participant’s discovery of who they are in light of having a sense of a real world identity and an online identity. Reference to roots of heritage was highlighted by one participant in particular:

. . . we become so vulnerable to the information that we see online because it's documented on our monitors and we believe it's the truth. It scares me so much as an African person that we are losing our identity and I mean African, I don't mean by race I mean everybody that's in Africa, we lose our true identity as African people because we don't have conversations with our elders no more about what our roots really are, we just google it and then google is complicated. It's just been evolved, it's not that authentic real knowledge no more. (Participant 6)

The participant admitted that young people rely on online activity more than on face-to-face experience in their daily lives, even though they can access family members as sources of reference. The above participant also highlighted an imperative observation or question, about young people possibly forgetting where their roots come from, thus not knowing who they are in the world. The self, or identity, may have not been moulded by heritage as a fact. The virtual world seems to be a bigger contributing factor to an individual's identity.

4.4 CONCLUSION

In this chapter the researcher presented the themes and findings of the research study and supported this with direct quotes of the participants who were part of the study. The findings were presented in a table of summaries (Table 4.3), after which the researcher provided the themes in greater detail, therefore analysing the findings with interpretations and brief discussions. The research aims are believed to have been reached as the researcher investigated how Facebook can contribute towards a group of first year students' sense of identity at a TVET College. Recommendations from the participants were also discovered within the findings and elevate participants to people with insider knowledge and acknowledge their meaning-making of engaging on FB. The researcher will present Chapter 5 with a summary and discussion of the findings, the strengths and limitations to this study and recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION, STRENGTHS, LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

I think that people just have this core desire to express who they are. And I think that's always existed.

Mark Zuckerberg (2015)

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The aim of this study was to discover TVET College first year student's participation on Facebook and to view how this was contributing towards the construction of their identity. This was done by looking at their own understanding of their sense of identity, how they presented their identity on Facebook and how this all contributed towards their sense of identity.

The study was based in an interpretive-constructivist paradigm and qualitative methodology. The participants' interpretive understanding or meaning-making of this phenomenon was explored within this socially constructed sphere. The theoretical framework that was used as a means of understanding the phenomenon and the findings in this study was the Social Representation Theory which looked at descriptions of the individual that others associate with him or her. These descriptions seemed to differ in many instances, specifically mentioning online and offline personalities or identities.

In this chapter the research questions will be weighed up against the findings, affording some conclusion to the research study. Strengths and limitations of the study, and finally the recommendations for future research, will conclude the chapter.

5.2 CONCLUSION TO THE RESEARCH FINDINGS

The utilisation of one-on-one interviews and the observation of profile pages of all participants provided a personal touch as the shared research data was very rich. The participants were able to share their experiences and that which they felt had meaning for them, each one individually, as well as commonalities shared among the group. They attributed these meanings to both online as well as offline and face-to-face experiences. This therefore provided the researcher

with information they had on how their sense of identity seems to be constructed both online and offline. They shared their preference for their online identity more than their offline identity.

Identity refers to a sense of self. The participants reflected on their online identity as the preferred identity to which they felt comfortable, as opposed to feeling uncomfortable with their offline identity. They were confident, friendly, expressive and engaging online, hence the construction of identity online became apparent when viewing their boldness on their profile pages. They also seemed to have many friendships online, but many admitted that it was more strangers than friendships, but regardless trusting those friendships. They admitted to these views of friendships as alternative views and so not necessarily their personal view. Thus, it would seem as though the identity construction of these group of students includes the viewpoints of others. This supports very strongly the social representations discourse of identity construction where people associate certain characteristics with the individual. Therefore building on their identities as reflections of what others' views of them are as well as their personal constructs of identity. This is supported by the participants who were far away from their family. They felt that they connected online to a community where they felt acknowledged and important. Hence, within the college context, they felt isolated offline, even among their class group peers, but online they connected actively.

In conclusion to the research questions, it would seem as though engaging on Facebook does contribute to first year TVET College students' identity construction as they seem to be constantly engaging on this online platform and view it as a natural part of their daily lives. Their online engagement provides alternative identity constructions. It would however seem that their preferred identity constructions are specifically evolving from their FB relations and experiences. Although an awareness of the virtual nature of these, their overall sense of identity seems to be very much influenced by their FB engagement and they cannot view their personal lives without being on Facebook. It also seemed as though this group of participants did not find it difficult to simultaneously hold different and even opposing ways of understanding and presenting themselves. Strong views were also expressed regarding insider know-how with regard to self-protection, keeping abreast of information, and being part of a new generation. Whether this phenomenon is particularly applicable to this specific cohort of first year students at this specific TVET College, is a question that needs to be asked. Therefore a recommendation for further research in this field will be put forward in section 5.5.

5.3 STRENGTHS OF THE RESEARCH

The researcher used a two-fold data collection method which incorporated qualitative methodology. The first being one-on-one interviews which were information rich sessions that were conducted with the participants, and secondly, the observation of the participant profile pages on Facebook which projected their online identity to others. This researcher, therefore, gained participants' personal viewpoints as well as getting access to online presentations of the individual. This rich data contributed to the trustworthiness of the study and the findings.

The researcher also investigated the phenomenon within an area of education which has not often been researched before, namely the TVET Sector. The changes that have occurred across the years have been documented but there is little research on the particular demographic of students that attend such an institution. This, therefore, provides an information rich study of this particular developmental level's profile and what is important to them as students at a TVET College.

Another additional strength of the study is that the focus is on SNS utilisation among a new generation of young people, especially students at higher education institutions. This provides a digital connection that TVET colleges should review and look into as ways of communicating with students. Students often mention that they do not have time and their studies are their biggest priority and thus, the research study showed FB as a possible avenue for connections.

5.4 LIMITATIONS OF THE RESEARCH

The TVET College sector comes with a history of on-going development and is still a unique sector within education in South Africa. Looking at the particular history of the college and the young people that study at an institution like this, there will constantly be a changing group of people in adolescence and emerging adulthood. There is more research to be conducted in this particular area of online identity as it seems to affect many young people in significant ways. The researcher however acknowledges that there may be limitations to the demographic sample of students as it changes continuously.

The particular sample utilised for this study was a relatively small sample of first year students compared to the amount of students that register for first year studies. The researcher therefore admits that there may have been significantly more information that could have been obtained

from a larger number of participants. For practical reasons only one TVET College was utilised and the transferability of the findings might be limited.

5.5 RECOMMENDATIONS

In Chapter 2, the researcher made reference to a previous researcher, who recommended that “virtual communities” be an important platform for colleges to utilise as a means for students to improve in transitioning into college and a better overall experience as a first year student. These “virtual communities” can be initiated by TVET colleges to reach out to the large numbers of students who have enrolled for the first time. It can, additionally, be used for senior students to share their experiences and assist these first year students to gain a sense of belonging by mentoring these students for their entry level year. Advice for self-protection can be offered to first year students on online platforms.

The TVET College Student Support Services Department can also share personal development advice with first year students and provide some online contact for students who have had a negative experiences online and need help with coping emotionally. After an initial online contact service is provided, an extensive referral process to one-on-one counselling or therapy can be made possible to help individuals who might need this.

Tips for accessing Facebook or other SNS’s can be made available to all students at TVET Colleges in order to alert them to potential dangers, such as cyberbullying and hacking of accounts, and make them aware of protective measures. This will help any student who belongs to SNS’s to know what to be aware of. The TVET College can incorporate this during their first year orientation programmes as well as placing these on relevant notice boards as well as in computer labs as screensavers. This will equip students with essential safe cyber knowledge and enable them to move safely with the new generation and technological movements that seem to be a growing trend.

With regard to further research, I would suggest that similar studies in different contexts within the developmental phase of adolescence be conducted, in order to explore whether students in different contexts utilise social media, and specifically FB, thus facilitating this function of development.

5.6 CONCLUSION

The researcher based the research within South Africa as a developing country, especially with regard to the TVET College Sector, and more specifically within a technological movement among a specific student demographic profile. Identity construction seems to be an ever-changing process of development among young people and will continue to be. It is possible that this might become more complex as more possibilities arise from on-going improvements in the field of technological development.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: ETHICAL CLEARANCE



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jou kennisvenoot • your knowledge partner

Approved with Stipulations
Response to Modifications- (New Application)

25-Aug-2014
CHETTY, Lamese

Proposal #: HS1102/2014

Title: FET College students' participation on Facebook and their identity construction.

Dear Ms Lamese CHETTY,

Your **Response to Modification - (New Application)** received on **22-Aug-2014**, was reviewed by members of the **Research Ethics Committee: Human Research (Humanities)** via Expedited review procedures on **25-Aug-2014**.

Please note the following information about your approved research proposal:

Proposal Approval Period: **25-Aug-2014 -24-Aug-2015**

The following stipulations are relevant to the approval of your project and must be adhered to:

The researcher is requested to submit a copy of the letter from [REDACTED] granting her institutional permission to access their students. Also, the researcher should clarify to which branches this permission gives her access to.

Please provide a letter of response to all the points raised IN ADDITION to HIGHLIGHTING or using the TRACK CHANGES function to indicate ALL the corrections/amendments of ALL DOCUMENTS clearly in order to allow rapid scrutiny and appraisal.

Please take note of the general Investigator Responsibilities attached to this letter. You may commence with your research after complying fully with these guidelines.

Please remember to use your **proposal number (HS1102/2014)** on any documents or correspondence with the REC concerning your research proposal.

Please note that the REC has the prerogative and authority to ask further questions, seek additional information, require further modifications, or monitor the conduct of your research and the consent process.

Also note that a progress report should be submitted to the Committee before the approval period has expired if a continuation is required. The Committee will then consider the continuation of the project for a further year (if necessary).

This committee abides by the ethical norms and principles for research, established by the Declaration of Helsinki and the Guidelines for Ethical Research: Principles Structures and Processes 2004 (Department of Health). Annually a number of projects may be selected randomly for an external audit.

National Health Research Ethics Committee (NHREC) registration number REC-050411-032.

We wish you the best as you conduct your research.

If you have any questions or need further help, please contact the REC office at 0218089183.

Included Documents:

REVISED_Facebook Privacy statement 3

REC application form

REVISED_Response to modifications

Institutional permission_Northlink
Letter_update on institutional permission
REVISED_informed consent form
Interview schedule
REVISED_REC application form
Informed consent form
Recruitment flyer
REVISED_Facebook Privacy statement 1
Letter to REC_Withdrawal of submission HS965/2013
DESC application
Research proposal
REVISED_DESC application
REVISED_Facebook Privacy Statement 2

Sincerely,

Clarissa Graham
REC Coordinator
Research Ethics Committee: Human Research (Humanities)

APPENDIX B: INFORMED CONSENT FORMS



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jou kennisvennoot • your knowledge partner

**STELLENBOSCH UNIVERSITY
CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH**

FET COLLEGE STUDENTS' PARTICIPATION ON FACEBOOK AND THEIR IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION

You are asked to participate in a research study conducted by *Lamese Chetty*, from the *Department of Educational Psychology* at Stellenbosch University. This form is available in English as it is the medium of instruction at this institution. The findings of this study will contribute to a research report in the form of a thesis, and will contribute to obtaining a degree. The focus of this research study is to explore FET College students' participation in online communication networks, specifically Facebook, and how it contributes to their identity. You were selected as a possible participant in this study because you are currently a registered student at XXX College and connected to Facebook via your cellphone, tablet or a computer.

1. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

Social networking, specifically Facebook (FB) provides a social environment for many adolescents and young adults to socialize in an uncommon way and without face-to-face (F2F) interaction. The purpose of this study is to explore how the active use of Facebook among a first year FET student population may contribute to their identity construction, in other words how does FB contribute to who you think you are.

2. PROCEDURES

If you volunteer to participate in this study, we would ask you to do the following:

a) Participate in a one-on-one interview

You will be invited to volunteer to participate in an interview to share your views. The interview will take place at an appropriate time and venue where you will feel comfortable to participate. The interview questions will be made available to you at the interview.

b) Access to your FB

You will also be asked to provide me, the researcher, access to your FB profile and posts. I would like to observe your posts for the past month as well as for this month live.

3. POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

4.

If you feel that you are not comfortable or there are any foreseeable risks, discomforts, inconveniences when answering the questions within the interview, please inform the researcher or your Student Support Services Department.

You should also keep in mind that by providing me access to your FB page, your privacy might feel compromised. I do undertake to ensure that confidentiality and anonymity will be adhered to throughout the process and that I shall not divulge any private or identifying information or names to anyone unless otherwise obligated by law. I shall use pseudonyms for all participants as well as for the College. Should you experience any discomfort in this regard, you are free to withdraw at any stage during the process, or by refusing me access to your FB page.

5. POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO SUBJECTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY

A potential benefit of the study will be a contribution to the FET Sector by providing a better understanding of students and their developmental phase, and may assist in fulfilling their needs for their future years at the FET institutions. This might help prepare the FET Sector for the technologically advanced student that applies to these institutions.

6. PAYMENT FOR PARTICIPATION

No payment will be allocated as this is a voluntary research process and you are requested to be a participant for the study.

7. CONFIDENTIALITY

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identifying will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law. Confidentiality will be maintained by means of keeping your information safe through allocating pseudonyms for all the participants. Therefore, all information will be kept safe and locked up. Only the researcher and relevant supervisor will have access to the records.

All data collected will be dealt with confidentially and in no way will your personal information be provided in a published document.

8. PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

You can choose whether to be in this study or not. If you volunteer to be in this study, you may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind. You may also refuse to answer any questions you don't want to answer and still remain in the study. The investigator may withdraw you from this research if circumstances arise which warrant doing so.

9. IDENTIFICATION OF INVESTIGATORS

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact Ms. L Chetty at 021 946 2250, 80 Voortrekker Road, Bellville, 7530 and/or Mrs. M. Perold (mdperold@sun.ac.za, 021 8082307) at the Faculty of Education, Stellenbosch University, Stellenbosch.

10. RIGHTS OF RESEARCH SUBJECTS

You may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty. You are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies because of your participation in this research study. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research subject, contact Ms Maléne Fouché [mfouche@sun.ac.za; 021 808 4622] at the Division for Research Development, Stellenbosch University.

SIGNATURE OF RESEARCH SUBJECT OR LEGAL REPRESENTATIVE

The information above was described to [me/the subject/the participant] by Ms. L Chetty in [Afrikaans/English] and [I am/the subject is/the participant is] in command of this language or it was satisfactorily translated to [me/him/her]. [I/the participant/the subject] was given the opportunity to ask questions and these questions were answered to [my/his/her] satisfaction.

I hereby consent voluntarily to participate in this study and I have been given a copy of this form.

Name of Subject/Participant

Name of Legal Representative (if applicable)

Signature of Subject/Participant or Legal Representative Date

SIGNATURE OF INVESTIGATOR

I declare that I explained the information given in this document to _____ [name of the subject/participant] and/or [his/her] representative _____ [name of the representative]. [He/she] was encouraged and given ample time to ask me any questions. This conversation was conducted in [Afrikaans/*English/*Xhosa/*Other] and [no translator was used/this conversation was translated into _____ by _____].

Signature of Investigator

Date

APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Interview schedule for one-on-one interviews with participants

The following interview allows you (the participant) to provide detailed information about the use of Facebook and its contribution towards your life. The content of the interview will be used within a Masters in Educational Psychology research study, thesis, or dissertation and your identity will remain confidential. You have the choice of providing a nickname or a preferred name when answering the questions. This interview will be for 40 minutes and will be an audio-taped interview. This information will be kept safe by the researcher and the supervisor.

SECTION A

Demographic information:

Name and surname:

Preferred name:

D.O.B:

Gender:

Race:

Nationality:

Course of study:

Facebook membership:year/smonths

SECTION B

Open-ended questions:

1. What are your main reasons for accessing Facebook and why?
2. How would you describe your membership to Facebook? What does it mean to you?
3. When you access Facebook and your friends make comments, in what way/s does it or has it affected you?
4. How would you describe your friendships that you have online?
5. What kind of person are you? What are the important things in life to you? What do you believe about yourself as a person?
6. If you think about your online personality/image/identity, how it is different (if at all) or the same than when meeting people face-to-face?
7. What would you describe as your most challenging experience when being online?
8. Do you belong to any online groups within Facebook? If yes, do you find that you engage in the particular group more or less than you would face-to-face?

9. How would you describe the virtual world compared to the reality?
10. Do you react differently with people online (Via Facebook) as opposed to when you are face-to-face with them? If yes, how?
11. Would you like to share any additional information on your experience of SNS that you have not mentioned before?

Thank you for participating in this interview. The personal information that you have shared is respected and your identity will remain confidential.

APPENDIX D: FACEBOOK TERMS OF SERVICE

Facebook's Statement of Rights and Responsibilities

This Statement of Rights and Responsibilities ("Statement," "Terms," or "SRR") derives from the Facebook Principles, and is our terms of service that governs our relationship with users and others who interact with Facebook, as well as Facebook brands, products and services, which we call the "Facebook Services" or "Services". By using or accessing the Facebook Services, you agree to this Statement, as updated from time to time in accordance with Section 13 below. Additionally, you will find resources at the end of this document that help you understand how Facebook works.

Because Facebook provides a wide range of Services, we may ask you to review and accept supplemental terms that apply to your interaction with a specific app, product, or service. To the extent those supplemental terms conflict with this SRR, the supplemental terms associated with the app, product, or service govern with respect to your use of such app, product or service to the extent of the conflict.

Privacy

Your privacy is very important to us. We designed our Data Policy to make important disclosures about how you can use Facebook to share with others and how we collect and can use your content and information. We encourage you to read the Data Policy, and to use it to help you make informed decisions.

Sharing Your Content and Information

You own all of the content and information you post on Facebook, and you can control how it is shared through your privacy and application settings. In addition:

For content that is covered by intellectual property rights, like photos and videos (IP content), you specifically give us the following permission, subject to your privacy and application settings: you grant us a non-exclusive, transferable, sub-licensable, royalty-free, worldwide license to use any IP content that you post on or in connection with Facebook (IP License). This IP License ends when you delete your IP content or your account unless your content has been shared with others, and they have not deleted it.

When you delete IP content, it is deleted in a manner similar to emptying the recycle bin on a computer. However, you understand that removed content may persist in backup copies for a reasonable period of time (but will not be available to others).

When you use an application, the application may ask for your permission to access your content and information as well as content and information that others have shared with you. We require applications to respect your privacy, and your agreement with that application will control how the application can use, store, and transfer that content and information. (To learn more about Platform, including how you can control what information other people may share with applications, read our Data Policy and Platform Page.)

When you publish content or information using the Public setting, it means that you are allowing everyone, including people off of Facebook, to access and use that information, and to associate it with you (i.e., your name and profile picture).

We always appreciate your feedback or other suggestions about Facebook, but you understand that we may use your feedback or suggestions without any obligation to compensate you for them (just as you have no obligation to offer them).

Safety

We do our best to keep Facebook safe, but we cannot guarantee it. We need your help to keep Facebook safe, which includes the following commitments by you:

You will not post unauthorized commercial communications (such as spam) on Facebook.

You will not collect users' content or information, or otherwise access Facebook, using automated means (such as harvesting bots, robots, spiders, or scrapers) without our prior permission.

You will not engage in unlawful multi-level marketing, such as a pyramid scheme, on Facebook.

You will not upload viruses or other malicious code.

You will not solicit login information or access an account belonging to someone else.

You will not bully, intimidate, or harass any user.

You will not post content that: is hate speech, threatening, or pornographic; incites violence; or contains nudity or graphic or gratuitous violence.

You will not develop or operate a third-party application containing alcohol-related, dating or other mature content (including advertisements) without appropriate age-based restrictions.

You will not use Facebook to do anything unlawful, misleading, malicious, or discriminatory.

You will not do anything that could disable, overburden, or impair the proper working or appearance of Facebook, such as a denial of service attack or interference with page rendering or other Facebook functionality.

You will not facilitate or encourage any violations of this Statement or our policies.

Registration and Account Security

Facebook users provide their real names and information, and we need your help to keep it that way. Here are some commitments you make to us relating to registering and maintaining the security of your account:

You will not provide any false personal information on Facebook, or create an account for anyone other than yourself without permission.

You will not create more than one personal account.

If we disable your account, you will not create another one without our permission.

You will not use your personal timeline primarily for your own commercial gain, and will use a Facebook Page for such purposes.

You will not use Facebook if you are under 13.

You will not use Facebook if you are a convicted sex offender.

You will keep your contact information accurate and up-to-date.

You will not share your password (or in the case of developers, your secret key), let anyone else access your account, or do anything else that might jeopardize the security of your account.

You will not transfer your account (including any Page or application you administer) to anyone without first getting our written permission.

If you select a username or similar identifier for your account or Page, we reserve the right to remove or reclaim it if we believe it is appropriate (such as when a trademark owner complains about a username that does not closely relate to a user's actual name).

Protecting Other People's Rights

We respect other people's rights, and expect you to do the same.

You will not post content or take any action on Facebook that infringes or violates someone else's rights or otherwise violates the law.

We can remove any content or information you post on Facebook if we believe that it violates this Statement or our policies.

We provide you with tools to help you protect your intellectual property rights. To learn more, visit our [How to Report Claims of Intellectual Property Infringement](#) page.

If we remove your content for infringing someone else's copyright, and you believe we removed it by mistake, we will provide you with an opportunity to appeal.

If you repeatedly infringe other people's intellectual property rights, we will disable your account when appropriate.

You will not use our copyrights or Trademarks or any confusingly similar marks, except as expressly permitted by our [Brand Usage Guidelines](#) or with our prior written permission.

If you collect information from users, you will: obtain their consent, make it clear you (and not Facebook) are the one collecting their information, and post a privacy policy explaining what information you collect and how you will use it.

You will not post anyone's identification documents or sensitive financial information on Facebook.

You will not tag users or send email invitations to non-users without their consent. Facebook offers social reporting tools to enable users to provide feedback about tagging.

Mobile and Other Devices

We currently provide our mobile services for free, but please be aware that your carrier's normal rates and fees, such as text messaging and data charges, will still apply.

In the event you change or deactivate your mobile telephone number, you will update your account information on Facebook within 48 hours to ensure that your messages are not sent to the person who acquires your old number.

You provide consent and all rights necessary to enable users to sync (including through an application) their devices with any information that is visible to them on Facebook.

Payments

If you make a payment on Facebook, you agree to our Payments Terms unless it is stated that other terms apply.

Special Provisions Applicable to Developers/Operators of Applications and Websites

If you are a developer or operator of a Platform application or website or if you use Social Plugins, you must comply with the Facebook Platform Policy.

About Advertisements and Other Commercial Content Served or Enhanced by Facebook

Our goal is to deliver advertising and other commercial or sponsored content that is valuable to our users and advertisers. In order to help us do that, you agree to the following:

You give us permission to use your name, profile picture, content, and information in connection with commercial, sponsored, or related content (such as a brand you like) served or enhanced by us. This means, for example, that you permit a business or other entity to pay us to display your name and/or profile picture with your content or information, without any compensation to you. If you have selected a specific audience for your content or information, we will respect your choice when we use it.

We do not give your content or information to advertisers without your consent.

You understand that we may not always identify paid services and communications as such.

Special Provisions Applicable to Advertisers

If you use our self-service advertising creation interfaces for creation, submission and/or delivery of any advertising or other commercial or sponsored activity or content (collectively, the “Self-Serve Ad Interfaces”), you agree to our Self-Serve Ad Terms. In addition, your advertising or other commercial or sponsored activity or content placed on Facebook or our publisher network will comply with our Advertising Policies.

Special Provisions Applicable to Pages

If you create or administer a Page on Facebook, or run a promotion or an offer from your Page, you agree to our Pages Terms.

Special Provisions Applicable to Software

If you download or use our software, such as a stand-alone software product, an app, or a browser plugin, you agree that from time to time, the software may download and install upgrades, updates and additional features from us in order to improve, enhance, and further develop the software.

You will not modify, create derivative works of, decompile, or otherwise attempt to extract source code from us, unless you are expressly permitted to do so under an open source license, or we give you express written permission.

Amendments

We'll notify you before we make changes to these terms and give you the opportunity to review and comment on the revised terms before continuing to use our Services.

If we make changes to policies, guidelines or other terms referenced in or incorporated by this Statement, we may provide notice on the Site Governance Page.

Your continued use of the Facebook Services, following notice of the changes to our terms, policies or guidelines, constitutes your acceptance of our amended terms, policies or guidelines.

Termination

If you violate the letter or spirit of this Statement, or otherwise create risk or possible legal exposure for us, we can stop providing all or part of Facebook to you. We will notify you by email or at the next time you attempt to access your account. You may also delete your account or disable your application at any time. In all such cases, this Statement shall terminate, but the following provisions will still apply: 2.2, 2.4, 3-5, 9.3, and 14-18.

Disputes

You will resolve any claim, cause of action or dispute (claim) you have with us arising out of or relating to this Statement or Facebook exclusively in the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of California or a state court located in San Mateo County, and you agree to submit to the personal jurisdiction of such courts for the purpose of litigating all such claims. The laws of the State of California will govern this Statement, as well as any claim that might arise between you and us, without regard to conflict of law provisions.

If anyone brings a claim against us related to your actions, content or information on Facebook, you will indemnify and hold us harmless from and against all damages, losses, and expenses of any kind (including reasonable legal fees and costs) related to such claim.

Although we provide rules for user conduct, we do not control or direct users' actions on Facebook and are not responsible for the content or information users transmit or share on Facebook. We are not responsible for any offensive, inappropriate, obscene, unlawful or otherwise objectionable content or information you may encounter on Facebook. We are not responsible for the conduct, whether online or offline, of any user of Facebook.

WE TRY TO KEEP FACEBOOK UP, BUG-FREE, AND SAFE, BUT YOU USE IT AT YOUR OWN RISK. WE ARE PROVIDING FACEBOOK AS IS WITHOUT ANY EXPRESS OR IMPLIED WARRANTIES INCLUDING, BUT NOT LIMITED TO, IMPLIED WARRANTIES OF MERCHANTABILITY, FITNESS FOR A PARTICULAR PURPOSE, AND NON-INFRINGEMENT. WE DO NOT GUARANTEE THAT FACEBOOK WILL ALWAYS BE SAFE, SECURE OR ERROR-FREE OR THAT FACEBOOK WILL ALWAYS FUNCTION WITHOUT DISRUPTIONS, DELAYS OR IMPERFECTIONS. FACEBOOK IS NOT RESPONSIBLE FOR THE ACTIONS, CONTENT, INFORMATION, OR DATA OF THIRD PARTIES, AND YOU RELEASE US, OUR DIRECTORS, OFFICERS, EMPLOYEES, AND AGENTS FROM ANY CLAIMS AND DAMAGES, KNOWN AND UNKNOWN, ARISING OUT OF OR IN ANY WAY CONNECTED WITH ANY CLAIM YOU HAVE AGAINST ANY SUCH THIRD PARTIES. IF YOU ARE A CALIFORNIA RESIDENT, YOU WAIVE CALIFORNIA CIVIL CODE §1542, WHICH SAYS: A GENERAL RELEASE DOES NOT EXTEND TO CLAIMS WHICH THE CREDITOR DOES NOT KNOW OR SUSPECT TO EXIST IN HIS OR HER FAVOR AT THE TIME OF EXECUTING THE RELEASE, WHICH IF KNOWN BY HIM OR HER MUST HAVE MATERIALLY AFFECTED HIS OR HER SETTLEMENT WITH THE DEBTOR. WE WILL NOT BE LIABLE TO YOU FOR ANY LOST PROFITS OR OTHER CONSEQUENTIAL, SPECIAL, INDIRECT, OR INCIDENTAL DAMAGES ARISING OUT OF OR IN CONNECTION WITH THIS STATEMENT OR FACEBOOK, EVEN IF WE HAVE BEEN ADVISED OF THE POSSIBILITY OF SUCH DAMAGES. OUR AGGREGATE LIABILITY ARISING OUT OF THIS STATEMENT OR FACEBOOK WILL NOT EXCEED THE GREATER OF ONE HUNDRED DOLLARS (\$100) OR THE AMOUNT YOU HAVE PAID US IN THE PAST TWELVE MONTHS. APPLICABLE LAW MAY NOT ALLOW THE LIMITATION OR EXCLUSION OF LIABILITY OR INCIDENTAL OR CONSEQUENTIAL DAMAGES, SO THE ABOVE LIMITATION OR EXCLUSION MAY NOT APPLY TO YOU. IN SUCH CASES, FACEBOOK'S LIABILITY WILL BE LIMITED TO THE FULLEST EXTENT PERMITTED BY APPLICABLE LAW.

Special Provisions Applicable to Users Outside the United States

We strive to create a global community with consistent standards for everyone, but we also strive to respect local laws. The following provisions apply to users and non-users who interact with Facebook outside the United States:

You consent to having your personal data transferred to and processed in the United States.

If you are located in a country embargoed by the United States, or are on the U.S. Treasury Department's list of Specially Designated Nationals you will not engage in commercial activities on Facebook (such as advertising or payments) or operate a Platform application or website. You will not use Facebook if you are prohibited from receiving products, services, or software originating from the United States.

Certain specific terms that apply only for German users are available here.

Definitions

By "Facebook" or "Facebook Services" we mean the features and services we make available, including through (a) our website at www.facebook.com and any other Facebook branded or co-branded websites (including sub-domains, international versions, widgets, and mobile versions); (b) our Platform; (c) social plugins such as the Like button, the Share button and other similar offerings; and (d) other media, brands, products, services, software (such as a toolbar), devices, or networks now existing or later developed. Facebook reserves the right to designate, in its sole discretion, that certain of our brands, products, or services are governed by separate terms and not this SRR.

By "Platform" we mean a set of APIs and services (such as content) that enable others, including application developers and website operators, to retrieve data from Facebook or provide data to us.

By "information" we mean facts and other information about you, including actions taken by users and non-users who interact with Facebook.

By "content" we mean anything you or other users post, provide or share using Facebook Services.

By "data" or "user data" or "user's data" we mean any data, including a user's content or information that you or third parties can retrieve from Facebook or provide to Facebook through Platform.

By "post" we mean post on Facebook or otherwise make available by using Facebook.

By "use" we mean use, run, copy, publicly perform or display, distribute, modify, translate, and create derivative works of.

By "application" we mean any application or website that uses or accesses Platform, as well as anything else that receives or has received data from us. If you no longer access Platform but have not deleted all data from us, the term application will apply until you delete the data.

By "Trademarks" we mean the list of trademarks provided here.

Other

If you are a resident of or have your principal place of business in the US or Canada, this Statement is an agreement between you and Facebook, Inc. Otherwise, this Statement is an agreement between you and Facebook Ireland Limited. References to "us," "we," and "our" mean either Facebook, Inc. or Facebook Ireland Limited, as appropriate.

This Statement makes up the entire agreement between the parties regarding Facebook, and supersedes any prior agreements.

If any portion of this Statement is found to be unenforceable, the remaining portion will remain in full force and effect.

If we fail to enforce any of this Statement, it will not be considered a waiver.

Any amendment to or waiver of this Statement must be made in writing and signed by us.

You will not transfer any of your rights or obligations under this Statement to anyone else without our consent.

All of our rights and obligations under this Statement are freely assignable by us in connection with a merger, acquisition, or sale of assets, or by operation of law or otherwise.

Nothing in this Statement shall prevent us from complying with the law.

This Statement does not confer any third party beneficiary rights.

We reserve all rights not expressly granted to you.

You will comply with all applicable laws when using or accessing Facebook.

By using or accessing Facebook Services, you agree that we can collect and use such content and information in accordance with the Data Policy as amended from time to time. You may also want to review the following documents, which provide additional information about your use of Facebook:

Payment Terms: These additional terms apply to all payments made on or through Facebook, unless it is stated that other terms apply.

Platform Page: This page helps you better understand what happens when you add a third-party application or use Facebook Connect, including how they may access and use your data.

Facebook Platform Policies: These guidelines outline the policies that apply to applications, including Connect sites.

Advertising Policies: These guidelines outline the policies that apply to advertisements placed on Facebook.

Self-Serve Ad Terms: These terms apply when you use the Self-Serve Ad Interfaces to create, submit, or deliver any advertising or other commercial or sponsored activity or content.

Promotions Guidelines: These guidelines outline the policies that apply if you offer contests, sweepstakes, and other types of promotions on Facebook.

Facebook Brand Resources: These guidelines outline the policies that apply to use of Facebook trademarks, logos and screenshots.

How to Report Claims of Intellectual Property Infringement

Pages Terms: These guidelines apply to your use of Facebook Pages.

Community Standards: These guidelines outline our expectations regarding the content you post to Facebook and your activity on Facebook.

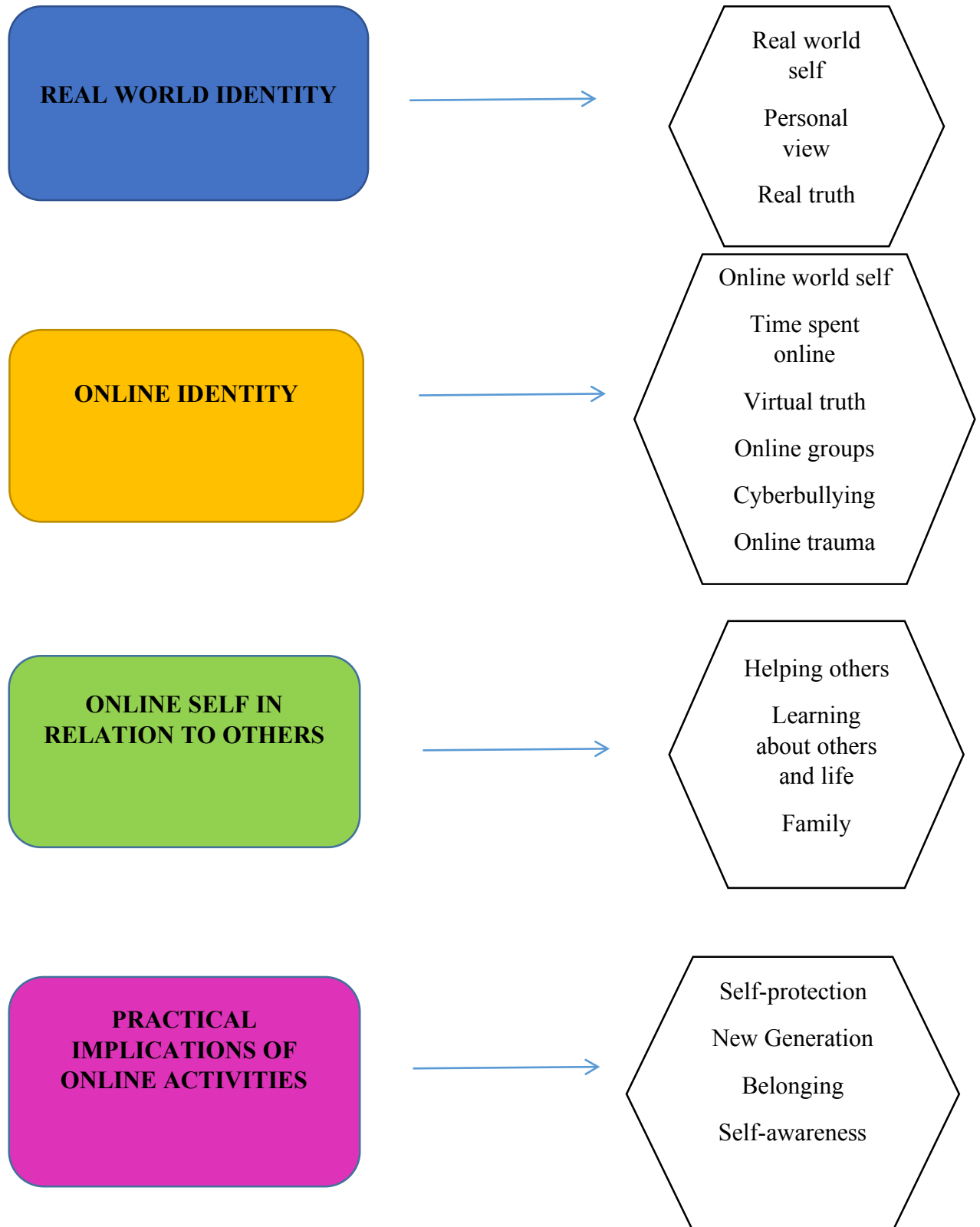
APPENDIX E: CODES FOR THEMATIC ANALYSIS

THEMES IDENTIFIED	SUB THEMES	QUOTES FROM PARTICIPANTS
REAL WORLD IDENTITY	REAL WORLD SELF	<p>“Yes there is a difference”</p> <p>“I only have...I don’t...I don’t have friends. I only have people I know”</p> <p>“I’m a very resilient person”</p> <p>“I believe myself as a person that I’m strong and I can overcome any challenge that could come to me”</p> <p>“Most important...at the moment is my studies, life basically revolves around that”</p> <p>“It’s a good thing to know people like you said, people admire your talents and what comes from your mind, that validation is sometimes also important”</p> <p>“...because you always think that people’s gonna judge you”</p> <p>“That I’m truthful, above everything that I’m truthful and that what you see with me is basically what you get”</p> <p>“...when you meet them face-to-face sometimes it doesn’t they are real, that they are real as they are on</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Admit to the influence of technology as a front 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ No real friendships 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Resilient 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Overcame challenges 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Has goals and dreams 	
	PERSONAL VIEW	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Involves others/family’s views 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ judgement of selves 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Values 	
	REAL TRUTH	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ No pretending 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Not confident 	<p>Facebook”</p> <p>“I’m able to interact with people who normally if I saw them in real life I’d be so shy I wouldn’t even bother looking at them so”</p>
ONLINE IDENTITY	<p>ONLINE WORLD SELF</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Exaggerated and confident ○ Connected to others ○ Pretending ○ Real VS Virtual (confirmed difference between this) <p>TIME SPENT ONLINE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Everyday ○ Time catcher <p>VIRTUAL TRUTH</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Trusting the online process as the truth, feeling safe ○ Different to reality/fairy-tale (seeming paradoxical understanding of 	<p>“ It’s not a proper extension of who I am, it’s a characteristic that I exaggerate on Facebook”</p> <p>“ For me to be on Facebook, it means to be connected to the world”</p> <p>“...when you personally see the person that you meet it’s very, very different person that you were chatting to Facebook...”</p> <p>“The virtual world is much more extreme than in reality, it’s downright vicious”</p> <p>“It’s mostly a timewaster for me”</p> <p>“Trusting people, it’s quite easy, I think I’ve learnt to realise it’s so easy for a person to say whoever you are or want on Facebook...”</p> <p>“Sometimes you can make it a fairytale on Facebook or whatever online chats you on or whatever you can make it a fairytale but in the real world it’s not gonna happen like that so there’s no actual link”</p>

	truth and reality)	
	ONLINE GROUPS	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Passive association (likes group, but no active engagement) 	“Like but some of the groups I don’t communicate but I just like the group”
	CYBERBULLYING	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Hacking of accounts 	“I felt...I actually felt really crap, if I can say that word, I felt crap because imagine someone stealing a really beautiful photo of you, just as you are now, and taking it and putting it on and pretending to be someone else and pretending to be something that is the total opposite of you”
	ONLINE TRAUMA	
	Loss of a loved one	“I lost someone in a car accident...I was online and in the group...”
ONLINE SELF IN RELATION TO OTHERS	HELPING OTHERS	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Advice and Motivation 	“...I’m there to look for jobs for people who need it and then I will take the information and give it to those who need the information”
	LEARNING ABOUT OTHERS & LIFE	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ See things online 	“...reading everyone else’s issues which is still very much entertaining, and I guess it’s to learn”
	FAMILY	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Feel close to them as they are far away 	“...family that lived far away, lived very far, and I have stayed in contact with them...”
PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS OF ONLINE ACTIVITIES	SELF-PROTECTION	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Teaching others valuable life lessons 	“...be careful of who you let in to your social media circles especially”

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Limitation of privacy settings o Online rules should be provided 	<p>About me section on Facebook of profile pages with available information for others to view.</p>
	<p>NEW GENERATION</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Facebook newsfeed 	<p>“We should learn more. They should tell us about how to use social networks”</p> <p>“...to read news because Facebook always gives news updates...”</p>
	<p>SELF AWARENESS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Roots of heritage questioned o Authentic self not being lived according to the perceived self 	<p>“it scares me so much as an African person that we are losing our identity and I mean African, I don’t mean by race I mean everybody that’s in Africa...”</p> <p>“It’s just been evolved, it’s not that authentic real knowledge no more”</p>



APPENDIX F: STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES

<p>Career Guidance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PACE Career Interest Assessment • One-on-one consultations or group assessments <p>Orientation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transition from school to college life/demands • Goal setting and motivation • MOT Lifeskills Workshops <p>Workshops</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifying your Learning Style • Managing your time effectively • Concentration /Memory Techniques • How to succeed in tests and exams • How to manage test and exam anxiety • Study groups • Understanding terminology of assignments, exams and tests <p>Resources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internet access • Typing • Printing facilities • Studying and reading space available • Research resources and materials 	<p>Job Readiness and Guidance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Job hunting skills using newspapers, internet, recruiting agencies • Drawing up a CV • Matching the CV to the job advertised • Preparing for the interview is twofold namely 'finding information about the company' and 'preparing yourself for interview questions' • Types of interviews, one-on-one, panel, sequential and telephonic • Basic conditions of service- Department of Labour ⇒ Occupational Health and Safety Act and regulations- Department of Labour ⇒ Work etiquette <p>Financial/ Bursary advice and support</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DHET Bursary Scheme • Access Trust (old TECSAT) <p>Student Representative Council (SRC)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assistance with the election and awareness of SRC • Guidance and mentorship to SRC Members • Assistance with SRC activities on campus
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APPENDIX G: INSTITUTIONAL APPROVAL

HUMAN RESOURCE DEPARTMENT
XXX COLLEGE

13 August 2014

Ms L Chetty

To Whom It May Concern

RE: APPROVAL FOR RESEARCH CONDUCTED AT XXX
COLLEGE

This letter serves as confirmation that the Executive
Management of XXX College has granted permission to Ms L.
Chetty to conduct research for her mini-thesis at XXX College.

Should you encounter any enquiries, please do not hesitate to
contact the Human Resource Department.

Regards
CEO